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PRACTICAL FALCONRY

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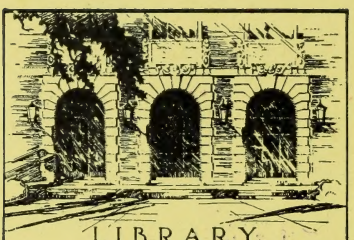

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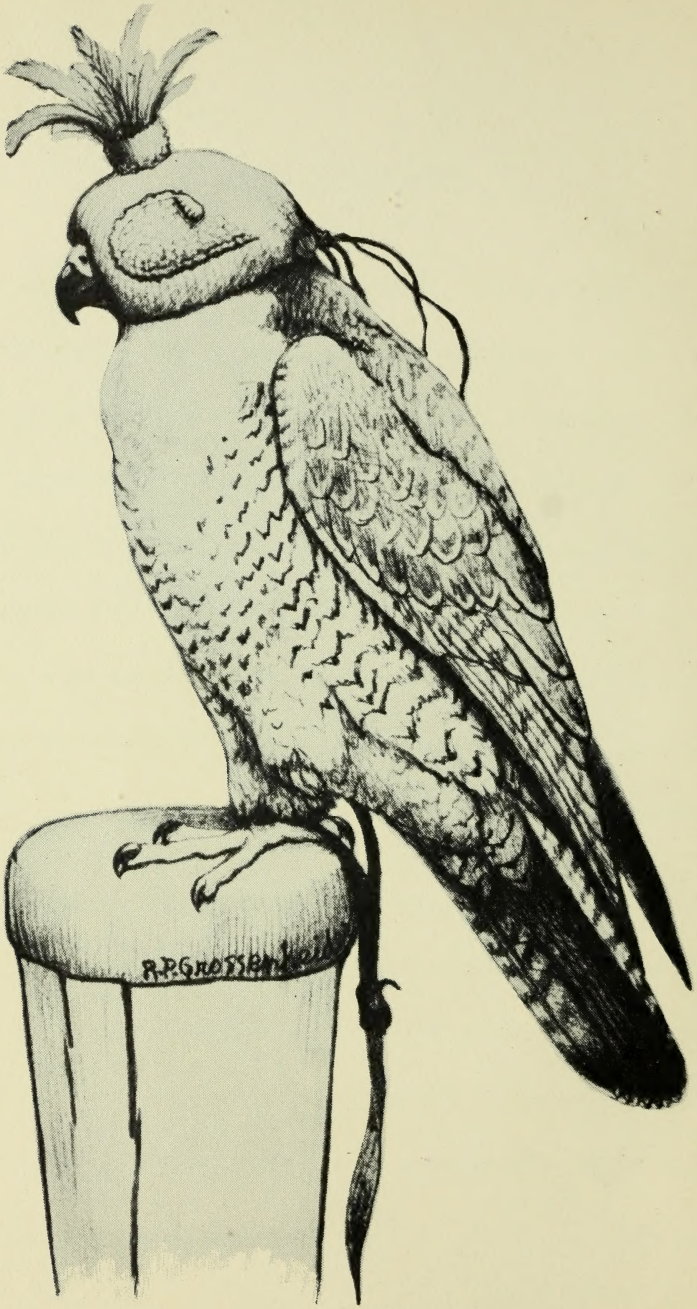
INTRODUCTION

Interest in the noble art of falconry continues. Though there is but a select group of falconers in this country who consistently fly hawks of one sort or another, there is a second and larger group who, for want of a better term, can be called "intermittent" falconers. The third and largest group consists of those who may never have taken an eyess nor trapped a haggard but who hold a great interest in hawking—and the art and literature of the sport. (These three groups total over 1500 in the United States). Interest also persists in England, Germany, Austria, and other foreign countries.

A paucity of authoritative books on the subject has been an important deterrent to revival of hunting with trained hawks. In 1950 the Carnie reprint of Bert's Treatise was completely sold in less than a year. It is hoped that making Freeman's work available in this new edition will, in some measure, fill an obvious need.

William Robert Hecht

December 1, 1954.



Hooded Peregrine on the Block.

PRACTICAL FALCONRY;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

HOW I BECAME A FALCONER.

BY

GAGE EARLE FREEMAN, M.A.

("PEREGRINE" OF "THE FIELD").

LONDON:
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TO

TWO OF HIS FRIENDS,

WILLIAM BRODRICK, ESQ.,

OF LITTLE HILL, CHUDLEIGH, DEVON,

TO WHOSE KINDNESS HE WAS LONG AGO INDEBTED FOR INSTRUCTIONS
IN THE ART OF FALCONRY,

AND TO

PHILIP L. BROCKLEHURST, ESQ.,

OF SWYTHAMLEY PARK, STAFFORDSHIRE,

WHO GAVE HIM
THE OPPORTUNITY OF PRACTISING IT
ON HEATHER,

THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED, WITH GRATITUDE AND REGARDS, BY

THE AUTHOR.

PRACTICAL FALCONRY.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARIES.

When, at the end of May last, I said "Good-bye" to Falconry as a writer on the subject, I was not prepared for the demand which was afterwards made for a practical treatise. That demand, however, induced me to appear again, for "positively the last time;" and I now offer my readers in a volume of "The Field Library" what I lately offered them in the paper itself, some few, but I trust thoroughly practical, chapters on the Art of Falconry.

I make no further preface, for my object is to keep entirely to the subject before me, beginning at the beginning, placing myself as much as possible in the position of a person who knows nothing of falconry, and trying to present such a treatise to my readers as I desired many years ago to obtain for myself.

Let me suppose, in the first place, that a man has some sort of floating feeling that he should like to *see* the falconry which he has read of in the "Waverley Novels," in some old book of British sports, or has heard of, for some years, as being really now carried out in this country. Let me suppose, further, that he is inclined to take up the matter himself.

He will want a tutor; and the first questions probably which he will ask are, "What sort of hawks should I have, and where can I get them?"

I answer—What is the character of your country?—what expense do you care to go to?—have you a manor of your own; or, if not,

have you friends who will give you pretty frequent permission? Because the kind of country, the depth of pocket, the courtesy of friends, are all very necessary elements in this as in many other sports.

If you are rich, and have opportunities for hawking game, and wish to hawk it, engage a professional falconer; but take care that he is a man accustomed to *game*-hawking. If you are a poor man, intending to hawk game, and having some opportunity of doing so, strive to know some good falconer, who will really *show* you the thing; and also—if I may venture to say so—read these chapters, which are, honestly, the result of long experience.

I need hardly speak of the character of country to a rich man, for he can most likely command countries of different character; but the man who can only hawk here or there will certainly want to know, at any rate, what birds not to keep.

Let us suppose that he has no game—no rabbits even—but that there is an open common near him affording rooks, magpies, pigeons, larks. Not the goshawk then; his hawks are the peregrine and merlin. Does he live near moors on which he can hawk? Still the peregrine. On fairly-open partridge ground? The peregrine still. But the goshawk is the bird for a very inclosed country; and, should he care to fly the sparrowhawk, he may add that.

This is just a rough and general answer to the question, "What sort of hawks a man ought to have?" And now we come to the second point: "How is he to procure them?"

As to the peregrine, I can only say generally that the species breed on high and dangerous rocks, both by the sea and inland; and that young birds are obtained by falconers, very frequently from Scotland, either from a personal friend or through John Pells, of Lakenheath, Suffolk, or Robert Barr, Brandon, Suffolk. It is a difficult matter to procure goshawks; but they may occasionally be got from one of the professional falconers, or from the Regent's

Park Gardens. As a rule they are imported either from France or Germany.

Merlins are found on the moors. They build on the ground, but are not often offered for sale. Mr. Pape, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, sometimes gets them for his customers.

Sparrowhawks are easily procured. The gamekeeper of a wooded manor is almost sure to be able to help the falconer.

Hobbies are so rare that it is hardly worth while to mention them; but, if procured, they should be treated like merlins.

The jer-falcons can be obtained from Iceland, Greenland, or Norway, by sending over a falconer to catch them.

Peregrines are worth about 30*s.* each as soon as they are taken from the nest, falcons being rather more valuable than tiercels. Goshawks, untrained, cost about £4 each, the females being the more valuable. Merlins should not exceed 6*s.* or 7*s.* each when they leave the nest. Sparrowhawks cost what you like to give for them, say half-a-crown each. As for hobbies, valuable chiefly for their rarity and beauty, I can mention no price for them. In the language of shopkeepers, they are "fancy articles" altogether.

Trained hawks vary in price in proportion to their merits. A first-rate grouse-hawk is, in my opinion, worth ten guineas; a bird entered only to pigeons, £5. I am speaking of the peregrine in both these cases.

Another question which the beginner will ask—and it is rather a comprehensive question—is, "Where am I to keep my hawks; must I fasten them up by the legs, or put them in a large room, or what must I do?" There are other questions equally important—coming in a measure from the last—such as, "What do you mean by jesses, hoods, swivels, leashes, blocks, perches, and so on?" Again, "On what are hawks to be fed; how much should they have at one meal?" "What is meant by all these terms which you falconers write about so glibly, 'waiting on,' and such like?"

It will be found that I shall answer all these questions in this little treatise, and most of them in this chapter.

In bad weather and during winter nights hawks should be under cover. Fastened to blocks as they are, they have no means of getting their blood warm by exercise, and weather which would not injure them at all when at liberty might destroy them in confinement. A shed is the best, and usual arrangement. It is easily made where there is a long wall to serve as a back; and it is proper that it should face the morning sun. A line of thick, low shrubs, planted in front, will in some degree keep off the wind. The ground under the shed should be six inches deep in sand, and good straw must be placed round each block, but not touching it, so as to protect the bird's wings when she bates. Every peregrine must have a space of eight feet square—mine have even more—thus the shed undoubtedly takes up a great deal of room ; but an unused loft will do. Straw is necessary on boards as well as on sand ; and sand must be placed on boards *immediately* round the blocks. Hawks may be kept in pitch darkness on a horizontal pole, and in this way they are often placed very near together ; but I should never think of adopting the plan myself, except in a case of emergency. In fine weather they are put out on the lawn.

Peregrines and merlins are generally kept on blocks ; goshawks and sparrowhawks on bow-perches.

The peregrine's *block* is a piece of wood the shape of a sugarloaf, with the top cut off. It is about twelve or fourteen inches in height, and has a spike at the base, which keeps it firm in the ground—a most important matter when blocks are placed near each other on a lawn, or when they are under the shed, because the birds would make sad work with their neighbours, if their legs got fastened to each other's leashes ; and they would injure their plumage if they could drag a block from its place in the shed, and so bring themselves too near the walls. The points of their wings when they

bate must not touch anything but the straw or grass, certainly not the sides of a shed. If the blocks are at any time placed in a loft, holes must of course be made through the boards for the admission of the spikes.

My blocks are formed of two pieces of wood neatly joined, in order to make it possible to have a large ring running in a *groove* round the base, on which moves a smaller ring, and to that the leash is fastened. But an ordinary staple driven into the side of the block will do.

The goshawk's *bow-perch*—upon which a peregrine may be placed if necessary—is simply a tough bough or sapling, bent to something like half a circle, and having a large ring running on it for the leash to be fastened to. A piece of wire should keep it in the form of a bow, leaving, however, plenty of length at the points, so that they may be made very fast in the ground. Should an accident happen, and one end come out, the wire will save the escape of the bird. It may be used under a shed, but it then obviously requires considerable room. A partition, too, must screen the sight of an immediate neighbour from the observation of a goshawk.

A hawk has a *jesse* on each leg. Jesses are made in this way: Take a narrow strip of moderately stout, but not harsh, leather, six or seven inches in length, cut it from a point, till (getting broader) at less than an inch from the point you have the breadth of not half an inch of jesse. Keep that breadth for an inch or more, then gradually narrow to less than the third of an inch; but, as you get pretty near the other end, widen a little. Why, "that's a thing that no fellow can understand." Still, I would take leather, a knife, and a board and try. At the broader end make a slit not far from the point, make another slit an inch from that, and a third slit at the other end of the jesse. Grease the jesse.

Get someone to hold the bird. Take the end of the jesse that has two slits, and, putting it round the hawk's leg, pass the point

through the second slit, and the other end of the jesse through the first. Draw tight. The slit at the other end has nothing to do with this arrangement; it is only made that the jesse may be fastened to the swivel.

The *swivel*—as also his *first* jesses, if the young falconer is wise—will be procured from Mr. Pells. Pass the end of the jesse through one loop of the figure 8, and the other loop through the slit in the jesse. Draw tight, so that the jesse binds only one loop, and does not interfere with the turning of the swivel.

The *leash* is a strip of whit or other stout leather, formed of one piece, and yet having a button at one end. It is passed through the vacant loop of the swivel, and the thin end is attached to the staple or ring of the block.

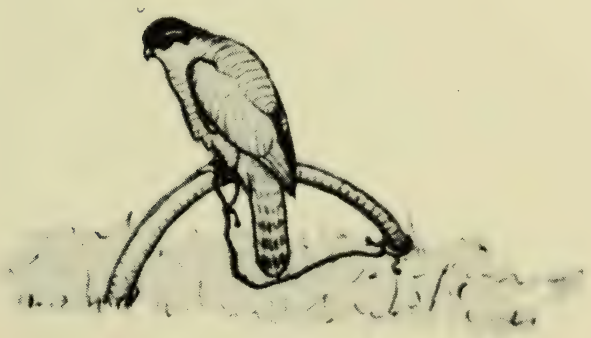
Hoods are made on blocks, and I have made them myself; but I would advise the beginner to procure them from Lakenheath, taking care to mention for what species of hawk they are wanted, and whether for falcon or tiercel.

As for the *glove*, worn on the left hand by European falconers, it must be procured from anyone who will undertake to make it. A very stout gardening glove of the gauntlet shape does very well—at any rate, for feeding and ordinary occasions; and beware of using anything very gay or unusual in which to show off before your friends, for some hawks will not let you take them up on a glove very different from the one they have been accustomed to.

The *lure* may be either dead or alive. The dead lure is a forked piece of wood, weighing a couple of pounds or more, covered with leather, if you like, and having the wings of birds fastened to it. Holes are bored through it for the convenience of tying on the food. I generally nail a piece of red cloth to some part of it. The live lure is simply a pigeon on a string. Don't tie *string* to his legs, for it will cut them, but use slip-knot jesses of soft leather, and be sure he is secured by both legs. Very high-fed and successful game

hawks sometimes decline to take the smallest notice of the dead lure, and must in that case be taken down with the live one.

Mr. Pells will provide *bells;* the worst of them is that they soon lose their tone, unless the falconer cares to be at the trouble to take them off after hawking; they are injured, I think, on the block. I bought some excellent little ferret bells the other day at Malvern, one of which I have now on a tiercel. It is possible to make bells out of one piece of metal, but I have never been fortunate enough to get such. Neither could I ever find any small enough for merlins. They are fastened to the hawk's legs (one to each hawk) by small pieces of leather called *bewits.* Take a thin strip two or three inches in length, cut to a point at each end. Pass it through the proper part in the bell. Rather near one end of the strip cut a slit (call it the "short"), not so near the other end cut another slit (call it the "long"). Put the leather round the hawk's leg; pass the "short" through the "long," and the "long" through the "short." Draw tightly.



CHAPTER II.

THE PEREGRINE FALCON (HACK).

THE falconer may receive his young hawks either when they are covered with white down, or a few days before they can fly, or when they are pretty strong on the wing. In the first case, he will very likely lose them by cramp, or, if not, he will probably be plagued with screamers; in the second he will be fortunate; in the third not quite so fortunate. But he must remember that everything does not depend upon when he receives the hawks; the point is, when were they taken? They may have been taken in the down, when far too young to be removed from the eyrie, and yet he may have received them when they were birds just about to fly. And it is sometimes difficult to command the proper time for their removal from the crags; for, if they don't come through your friend's keeper, if the eyrie is open to plunderers generally, the probability is that jealousy and fear of his neighbours will induce someone to take them too soon: just as our old friend Paley says, in the matter of the cherry tree in the hedge-row, "It can be of no use to anyone, as each person would rather gather the fruit for himself before it is ripe, than lose it altogether by leaving it to another."

I have mentioned just now the very strong objection there is to taking the hawks too soon; but there are objections, though not nearly so strong, to taking them too late. If the nestlings are so forward that they have to be run down—the thing has been done, though the nature of the ground sometimes makes it impossible—by the time they reach you they will be tolerably strong birds. And then there is a considerable delay before it is safe or possible to put

them out to hack, during which they mature most rapidly. There is a good deal of tact required in putting them out at all, and, when they are out, they must not remain at liberty very long.

If I have a reader who literally knows nothing of falconry, will he oblige me by waiting for an explanation of the term "hack," whilst I write one or two more sentences about it, and things belonging to it?

I think, then, this, that birds taken from the nest less than a week before they can fly, and reaching you a day or two before flight, are taken and received at exactly the right time. There is no danger of cramp, and none of screaming (artificially brought on); there is no wasting the precious days of the first powers of flight by keeping the birds immured while they are made acquainted with the lures; there is no shortening the period of hack, because the birds are so *old* that they can prey for themselves easily when they have been out a fortnight. And now for "hack" itself.

Hack is the state of liberty in which eyesses are kept for some little time before they are trained. It is managed in this way:

When the young birds are received, they are at once (unless excessively young) supplied with bells and jesses; and in any case they are put on a platform some four feet high, which is erected in the corner of an outhouse—an empty loft or an unused coach-house answering the purpose very well. When they thoroughly know the lures, and will come down from the platform to them, the door is opened, and they are allowed to fly. They will return at feeding times.

Let us suppose the first case, viz., that *very* young hawks have reached you. There is time enough to put on the bells and jesses, for hack bells are much larger than flying bells, and would only distress such small birds. Put plenty of clean straw on the platform, which should have sides of two or three inches high, with horizontal bars touching their tops, on which the birds will perch; and

make your guests as snug as possible. Cut up raw beefsteak into small pieces, and feed with a rather blunt stick or strong straw. Vary the diet with pigeon, hen, and sometimes rabbit. The last is not supporting, but is an excellent change amongst stronger food, and is used in the real eyrie. I have looked into *that* nursery larder myself. You may feed these very young birds three times a day, but twice a day will soon be sufficient. If you rear them, I fear —as I have already said—they will turn out screamers,* and make your head ache in after days. Also they may grow up with sodden-looking eyes, and without the life and briskness of birds taken at a later period. At any rate, all these things often happen when shepherds and such people have taken the nest too soon, in order to be well beforehand, and have kept the birds themselves for a fortnight or more, feeding them, no doubt, on all manner of filth. There would be one advantage perhaps to the young falconer in having birds of this sort—he could have no possible difficulty in putting them out to hack. They would become perfectly tame; they would go, step by step as it were, from the inside of the outhouse to its roof, from its roof to the house-top, and so on; and they might be out at hack a very long time.

Take the second case, in which the birds reach you in their best stage. Bell and jesse them at once; place them on the platform; feed them with the stick or the end of your finger, as they will bear either, for the first two days, sounding a whistle the while, as indeed you should do in our first case. Then lose no time in introducing them to the lures, which place on the platform, so held or tied that they can't be dragged into a corner, and the meat eaten in the dusk. Stand by during the meal, and now and then offer your tit-bit of steak at the end of a straw. That, however, is not of

* This, however, is not invariably the case. Not long ago I heard of a bird taken from the nest when very young which did not scream at all.

much practical good in one way, for, do it as you will, the birds will most likely have to be taken up with the bow-net eventually. Still, it must rather tend than not to give them confidence, and to prevent "carrying" in after times. Very soon they will fly down to the lures on the ground, and eat eagerly. That will do. Open the doors and let them out. They will perhaps be hours before they leave. Mind they are not frightened just as they take their departure. Take care to be ready at the feeding times, on the lawn or in the neighbouring field, with your lures and whistle. Eight in the morning and six in the evening will do; but, as they get older, it is as well to feed them sooner in the morning, to prevent them preying much for themselves.

The third case is rather difficult. Birds come to you which would fly for half a mile if you were to let them out. Well, I think still the platform. If possible, get someone to spend some time with them; and the window had better be protected by perpendicular, not horizontal, bars of wood. They must not be let out till they know the lures thoroughly, though a good deal of time has been lost. Still they may make excellent birds. I would rather have one of them than three taken too early. If birds come with their feathers the full length, able to fly well, though it is difficult to know what has been done with them a week or two before you had them, and how it is possible they are so forward, they may be put on blocks on the lawn, tamed to a certain extent by carriage on the fist, even broken to the hood, *and then* turned out to hack. But they should be turned out to hack in a particular way. For two days before they are set at liberty give them a live pigeon at the block, in some place where the feathers will not be considered a nuisance—in the field near your garden for instance. I prefer white pigeons for the purpose. Let all the feathers remain. On the third day set the hawk at liberty—he not knowing it—while he is eating the first part of a *third* pigeon. This is easily done by having his jesses simply hooked to a spring

swivel, which is fastened to your glove by a bootlace, or something that looks better if you like. You then unhook the swivel, and leave him on the pigeon, which I need hardly say is fastened by a short string near the block. Put a pigeon out alternately with the dead lure every night in the dark, or before daylight in the morning, and you may keep your bird at hack a fortnight or more, especially if the hack-bells are pretty heavy; for she will come in the morning. Feed in the evening too.

Indeed, I may as well mention here a plan which, such as it is, I originated, and which I have found very successful with older birds. I fly my hawks in my own neighbourhood, and therefore I have the following means of keeping them about. I have a block in my field near the house, to which I fasten a live pigeon. A young hawk, just before it is flown at game, is put up and brought down to this pigeon; it is fastened to the block, and allowed to eat the bird. Remember, also, that it has been flown at hack in the neighbourhood. The arrangement may be repeated; and, that having been done, I think you are quite safe as regards the hawk coming home, should she be out all night on a grouse, which she has killed where you are not able to find her. In such a case, put down your live pigeon at night, and be up by daylight; she will be on it. This I call my "live hack." The dead lure will not do for successful game hawks, which always look for blood; at any rate, it must be used (I still, of course, speak about the lost hawk and live hack) very sparingly. There is *some* danger in hawks being out all night in the spring or early summer, but even then they will generally come to the live hack. It has saved me an immense deal of trouble —the trouble of going for miles shouting and throwing up lures.*

Hawks in our first case, let out to hack when perfectly tame, may

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* If a lost hawk should not return to the live hack, it must be looked for at daylight close to the place where it was last seen.

be kept tolerably tame for some weeks, and may even be taken up on the lures without the use of a net. But to ensure this you must stand close to them every time they are fed, and it is well to give them a juicy bit of meat from the hand now and then as they are feeding. Hawks in our second or third case almost always require the net, though you may approach some of them within a few yards. The wildest, however, will make very considerable tact necessary. A long string must be used, put perhaps through a stone wall, or some other fence, so that they can't get even a glimpse of you as you pull.

Before describing the bow-net, with which hack hawks are taken up, I must give a hint as to the care required in letting out hawks in our second case. They should be induced to come out, when decidedly hungry, to lures just out of the place in which they have been kept; there let them gorge themselves, taking care, as I said above, not to alarm them while they are leaving the neighbourhood of the outhouse for the first time. They should fly quietly off to short distances, and even then it may be necessary to look them up at feeding time, and perhaps go to *them* for the first day.

The *bow-net* is this: a net fastened to two semicircles of iron bar (five-sixteenths in size), which are joined together at their ends by simple hinges—mere loops, in fact. When the whole is open, it should measure full three feet from hinge to hinge, and four feet and a half across the other way. To set it, peg down one half; throw back the other half over it, tucking the net in close and neatly. Fasten a long and strong string to the iron of the moveable half, but not quite in the middle. Draw an imaginary line from one hinge to the other; and just within that line, and a little nearer to the side on which the string is not fastened, place a hooked peg firmly in the ground. To this a pigeon is made secure with very short jesses; or perhaps the lure, well furnished with meat, in one place only, is made quite immovable. Take a light peg, and, putting it

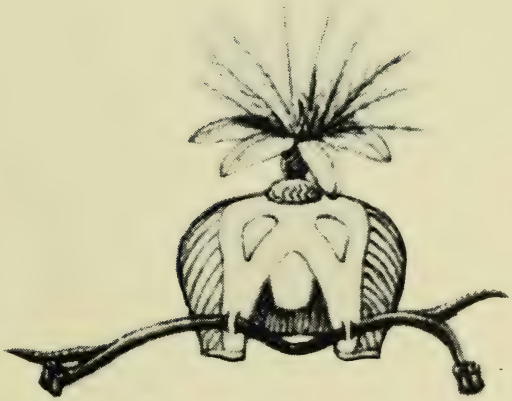
only a very little way in the ground, let it hold the string well away from the pigeon or lure—of course on the side where it is fastened. Thus, when a hawk is feeding, even should he drag the whole length of the pigeon towards the string, he will not make it impossible for you to pull, because he will not be so near the string as to receive an injury from it when it is jerked. Take care also to pull a little towards the side on which the string is tied. It is a good plan to strew some pigeons' feathers over what little is seen of the net, especially if you are catching a very wild hawk. Practise a pull or two before you finally set and leave the net, for anything like a mistake may make the bird very shy the next time he comes. When he is caught let some one hold him firmly across the shoulders with both hands whilst you turn the net over, and either hook the jesses to a spring swivel on your glove, or hastily place a leash through the slits for the time being. Of course, hood at once.

I think that *hack* is necessary; certainly I should not care to train and enter a hawk to such a quarry as grouse which had not been so flown. By hack muscles are strengthened, and the birds made clever and adroit in their turns and stoops. With regard to its length, that must depend upon the age of the birds when you received them. As I have said, hawks which creep out to the roof, so to speak, quite young and tame, may be out a long time—say six weeks. But those which leave you when they are wild and forward cannot be out so long; certainly not as a rule, though it is possible that you may find such birds so naturally docile that they may be taken up in six weeks or even more. Falcons perhaps require a longer hack than tiercels; but keep all of them at liberty as long as you can do so with safety.

The sort of country for hack is that which is wild, and free from adverse guns; you must have no human enemies on it. It should, therefore, be without game; and, for every reason, I think it should be without much game—indeed, with as little quarry of

any sort as possible. However, there is doubtless a very great advantage in flying where you hack, so that a case may occur in which you must hack amongst game. But there are possibly some advantages in that, as well as disadvantages.

In the next chapter I shall say something about hooding, training, &c., beginning at the point where we left the birds—just taken out of the bow-net.



CHAPTER III.

CASTINGS—HOODING—FLOWN TO THE LURE—"WAITING ON"—USE AND ABUSE OF PIGEONS.

THE hawks are now taken out of the net and hooded. Let them be placed hooded on their blocks for an hour or two; when, if their crops are empty, as they are pretty sure to be, they may be carried, the hood being rapidly replaced the moment it is taken off, and this continued for some little time. Take the hoods off, the first night, in case of any *castings* being in the bird; for no hawk can cast through an ordinary hood fairly drawn, unless the beak-hole is cut as no man ought to cut it.

I do not wish to pass by any term which may not be understood, as though it were understood; and when I have occasion to use any such terms, I shall generally pause to explain them, knowing that the educated falconer—if he should read this—or even the half-educated falconer, will not be disgusted at finding all the rudiments set down here for the benefit of those who are not falconers at all.

Castings are the egg-shaped masses of fur or feather which a hawk ejects from the mouth several hours after he has finished his meal. They are of a very considerable size, and are supposed to take from the stomachs anything improper; certainly they are very moist, and often rather slimy when new. They are, however, necessities, because some feathers or fur must be eaten; and, whatever a fox may do in another "quarter" (and I have seen wool in the Highlands in his excrement), a hawk can only get rid of such things through the throat. A hawk in a good state of health should throw castings that have scarcely any smell, and they should be well and firmly wrapped, not loose and of no shape.

To return. Your newly-taken hawk will have an opportunity of casting, the hood having been removed; and, if he is put on a soft lawn, or with plenty of straw round the block, and is not frightened, whatever bating there may be when daylight comes won't do him the least harm. I used to be afraid of this, but I have found by long experience that moderate bating, without a crop of food, need not be feared. Carry the bird the next day, hooding and unhooding, offering him after a time the leg of a fowl to pull at. Probably he won't look at it; he will only fly off your glove, and hang by the jesses. Don't hold him *too* short: have your thumb and finger just on the jesse side of the swivel; he will take a little in time; if he won't come up himself, when he hangs put your right hand on his breast and quietly lift him up. If he should absolutely refuse food the first day (and you must only feed him on your fist), try him early on the second; if he won't eat then, make him open his mouth in his anger, and pop some pieces in, well down, at the end of a strong straw, or not too sharp a stick. This is just to keep the stomach in action. He will soon come to, and few hawks—*eyesses* of course—will give you so much trouble. Try first to make him feed through the hood, the beak-hole being very large; but stop this practice as soon as possible.

An *eyess* is a nestling hawk, differing from a *haggard*, which is an old wild-caught bird.

In a few days you will have very much tamed the bird, and perhaps have broken him to the hood—a thing, though, often done before the bird is tame. Much depends upon the disposition of the bird; and, as to hooding at any rate, a great deal on your own adroitness. But the aptitude for hooding does not make a falconer, as I need hardly say. I can hood indifferently well, but not so well as one of our professionals, who engages to hood a wild hawk, he, the professional, being blindfold. That is very pretty; but if the professional has nothing else to boast of—which he has—a mounte-

bank might beat him. It is a manual affair only, of course perfected by practice. Still, good hooding is very valuable—clearly, at any rate, not at all to be despised, for you may harm a bird very much by clumsiness, if you give your mind to it.

Perhaps it is difficult to *write* directions for hooding; I wish it could be seen. The allowing a bird to pull at meat *through* the hood—*i.e.*, the hood being on—is a help in hooding and in taming; but, as I have just said, it should be done sparingly, for this reason: a bird accustomed to pull through the hood may, when trained, bite your glove when she is hungry, and that is a most tiresome habit. My own practice, after a hawk has been taken from the bow-net, has been simply to hood, put on a block for a couple of hours, carry for an hour, keeping the hood loose, and replacing it before it has been *quite* removed. At night the hood is taken off altogether, as I have said. The hawk is taken from the block in the morning, carried for an hour, constantly hooded and unhooded, made to pull a little at a fowl's leg through the hood, and for a few moments—for some time, if possible—after it has been quietly slipped *off*. She is then placed hooded on the block till you have a further opportunity of carrying her. No castings must be given, therefore the leg of the fowl must be stripped entirely of its feathers. If the fowl is old, the leg will be full of fat; cut that away.

Don't plague yourself with one hawk for more than two hours a day, unless she is very tiresome. Take her by degrees amongst company, having the hood ready to put on the moment she bates wildly off your glove. Continue this sort of thing, and in less than a week—sometimes in four days—the hawk will be well broken to the hood. You give no castings, because for two nights, when you are certain that her stomach is free from them, the bird should sleep hooded. This may seem a royal road to breaking to the hood; but I think it will be found to answer with most hawks, unless the falconer is clumsy, which I confess he may be from inexperience.

In that case, a little more "pulling through" the hood, and a little longer time, may be necessary.

When I said it is difficult perhaps to write directions for hooding, I spoke of the dexterity which is gained so much by practice and so little by books. But I must try to offer something. Take the hood in your right hand (the hawk being seated on your left), and hold the plume firmly and low down, either between the thumb and forefinger, or between the first and second finger, but not near the tip of the finger. In either case the position of the hood must derive some firmness from the ball of the thumb, the hollow of the hand, and the spare fingers. In hooding rebellious hawks, the spare fingers are so placed behind the hood as to catch the nape of their necks when they throw their heads back; in all cases the movement is tolerably rapid. Newly-caught hawks, and such as have been frightened with the hood, can sometimes hardly be hooded at all, except by first-rate hands, till they hang from your glove by the jesses, and then it is not easy; someone is generally enlisted to draw the straps tightly. However, that soon passes away. A great matter is not to lose one's temper. How well I remember a lady pupil of mine telling me (perhaps she may also remember it if she should see these lines) that it took two strong men to hold her falcon Mora when being hooded!

But a hawk is not always, or often perhaps, ready to be put on the wing again as soon as she stands the hood. Before it is safe to do that, she must come well from the block, not only to the lure, but to the fist, as a rule; but this cannot always be insisted upon. She ought to bate towards the lure when you swing it at a little distance, shouting to her at the same time. A very great matter is to get on with the birds as quickly as possible; and if any of them are particularly troublesome, they must make a greater call on your time than the others do. Indeed, they may have to lose some flesh; for remember that the benefit of hack begins to fade away when hawks

have been confined a long time to the blocks. A week is enough for some birds between taking up from hack and flying to the lure, but others can hardly be got ready in so short a time. Three weeks is certainly far too long.

When the birds—especially eyesses—are broken to the hood, they need only wear it for an hour or more a day (except, of course, when going to and from the field), unless, indeed, they are seen to bate much from some cause or other. I don't say that they should miss a day in being hooded; if they do so, they get to dislike the hood from too seldom wearing it; but, assuming no dislike, then let them sit barefaced. They soon get tame on a lawn by doing so, especially if there are children and dogs about—agents, however, to be employed in moderation, as they must not tease or frighten the birds. *Hooded* birds, it is clear, might just as well be away from society.

When a hawk, broken to the hood and made tame by carriage and the presence of people, is put on the wing for the first time, she must be decidedly sharp-set—*i.e.*, she must have had only half a crop about twenty-five hours before. I don't know how it is, but I have almost always found that good fresh beefsteak—which must be exceedingly nourishing—gives hawks which were fed on it yesterday an appetite to-day. I fancy it must give a tone to the stomach, and a sort of *spurt* to the bird's constitution. *Hot* birds—*i.e.*, birds just killed—though excellent, do not seem to me to leave such an appetite as beef does. I give both, and now and then rabbit, but the last not often, to hawks worked daily at grouse. It is cooling, and not unnatural food, as I have said before, and a nice change.

Well; the hawk is on the wing to the lure. You have taken her, as far as you can, from the neighbourhood of trees or stone walls. Don't keep her too long on the wing the first time, or perhaps she may sit on the ground: if not a dashing bird—if, in short, possibly a bad one—she may do so in any case. Supposing she does, walk up to her till she rises; and on no account throw her the lure till she

is on the wing. I am speaking now of course only of *this* stage. Reward her well when you have lifted her on the lure. You don't touch her, of course; you only take the lure in your hand, just under where she is eating, and fasten the jesses to the hook-swivel on your glove, or to the leash, which you pass through their slits for the time being. Detach the beef, fowl's leg, piece of pigeon, or what you have, from the lure by a cut of your knife on the string, and hold it firmly in your hand, well down in your grasp: this is simply to save you the nuisance of weight in carrying a heavy lure in one hand. When she has finished (but rather let her eat on her way), hood and take her home; but let her sit barefaced on her block, if you know that she will sit quietly. If you think she won't, keep the hood on by all means. Fasten her to the block before you take the hood off.

We have now made considerable progress, and the hawk is ready for entering to quarry. The orthodox plan is to give her a pigeon at the block, which she kills and eats; and, the day but one after this meal, to fly her at a young one. Now, the entering to pigeons has its advantages and disadvantages. Amongst the *former* we have the constant exercise and practice which the hawk gets by the flights, and the many valuable lessons she may receive in "waiting on." Let us look into this a little.

Waiting on expresses the action of a hawk circling above the falconer, and waiting till he springs quarry. When a wide-ranging dog is used, a good and practised game hawk will be seen to wait more on him than on his master. The peregrine can't go up too high. A bird that will "wait on" in the clouds, like the little falcon Aurora, the property of the Count Alfonso de Aldama, and lately flown at grouse in Scotland, can hardly be valued by such and such a number of sovereigns—she is priceless. That bird, however, is not an eyess, she is a wild-caught hawk, and of such I must say a few words in one of these chapters. Most hawks do nothing like this; screamers keep close to the ground as a rule, and many of

the best birds don't always exceed 100 yards. But the marvellous advantage of high "waiting on" is obvious; it commands a great extent of moor, it often causes a cut over at the first stoop, and, in any case, gives monstrous power and impetus. "Not to speak it profanely," I declare that to see a trained hawk come out of heaven, frequently with the zigzag of lightning, upon rapidly-flying grouse, sends a something through my whole frame, so thrilling in its pleasure, that I almost fancy, in some previous state of existence, I must have been the real peregrine himself.

I am not forgetting our business, however, in these raptures. We were speaking of the advantages and disadvantages of entering young hawks to pigeons, and one of the advantages was that they may be made useful in the practice of "waiting on"—a term which I paused to explain. They may be made useful in this way. You have quarry in your hand; and when a young hawk has kept well and patiently above you for some little time (don't try her patience too much), and you feel that the lure which she was called down to yesterday is not enough reward, you have it in your power to give her a *flight*, to teach her, by a convincing proof, that if she will only keep well above you, there shall not always be a lack of quarry. This I think very important. Again, all young hawks will be ready some time before the 1st of September, and generally before the 12th of August. At what, then, are you to fly up to those dates, if not at pigeons? The lure will hardly be sufficient.

And now for the disadvantages. There is no quarry to which hawks take more kindly or naturally than pigeons. They are very soon wedded to them, and I have known tiercels, which have been flown at pigeons up to the 1st of September, make such lazy attempts at partridges that great trouble has been the consequence. Perhaps a partridge has had to be netted, or some such device resorted to, by way of entering, before any sport could be obtained. And even with falcons, which are not so soon spoiled as tiercels, it

is necessary to be careful in the use of pigeons. When a falcon is not entered to grouse till these birds are very strong, she will probably lose the first two or three she flies at. Then will come the memory of the pigeons she killed easily, and you may see her, after pursuing the game with no earnestness for a couple of hundred yards, wheel back and leave them. Hawks differ, however, some losing heart much sooner than others.

At any rate, do not let a young hawk be too successful with pigeons. Give her some old blue rocks, with plenty of law, time after time—not, however, till she has flown and killed a couple of young ones—and when she comes back tired and disappointed, throw up to her a brown chicken on the heather or stubble.

CHAPTER IV.

PARTRIDGE AND GROUSE HAWKING, WITH SOME COMMENTS ON "CARRYING," MARKERS, WOOD PIGEONS, ETC.

I THINK it may be said that every young tiercel, in good health, sharp-set, and not utterly wedded to pigeons, will fly partridges the first time he sees them. And every falcon, the two first conditions being kept, and whether she has been flown constantly at pigeons or not, will go straight at her first grouse. If she should kill, the pigeons will have done her no harm; if she lose her quarry, and that more than once, she will hanker after another with which she managed better.

It is obvious that young hawks should be put on the wing above *young* birds, when that is possible, the first time they fly game; and I must leave it to the falconer's conscience as to the precise date of his hawk's first introduction to this quarry. For myself I have no opportunity of doing anything but adhering strictly to the game laws; indeed, I hardly ever fly my first grouse so soon as the end of August. It is necessary too, as I have said, that the hawk should be really hungry; while it is not only unnecessary, but likely to be fatal to success, that she should be in a state of famine. She must have plenty of flesh and pluck, and be without pangs of hunger, or she will keep close to the ground, or hang over your head, looking only for the lure. Neither do I object to a moderate wind; so far from that, I think it very necessary to have it, especially if it be a warm one. Birds like to feel it under them; it gives them courage, and makes high flying easy. It is a very good hawk that does not hug the ground on a perfectly still day. A bright sun, however, will sometimes tempt birds up.

Your dog has found partridges in a tolerably open country—it is clearly a dead point (never mind if the country is not so very open)—and you have unhooded and cast off a tiercel. The hawk has been taught to "wait on" to the lure, and to the few pigeons you have thrown up under him, and therefore he follows you to the point. Don't be in too great a hurry; let him have time to get up; and when you think he will go no higher, and when his head is towards you, put up the birds as nearly under him as may be. Perhaps he will take one at once, or he will "put them in" (*i.e.*, into cover), or will kill at some distance. If he kill at once, keep everyone back but yourself, dogs too, and go up quietly, and yet with confidence. Kneel down, or retire a little if he is nervous; indeed, should he seem fidgety, let him plume and break into the bird a little (and this will probably take longer than you imagine). Then lift the partridge firmly in your left hand, the hawk remaining upon it; secure him, feed him up with beef, or the hot leg of a chicken, given under the wing of the quarry; then hood him, and fly him no more that day. If he appear quite steady, pulling at the head or neck, take him at once.

But we will now suppose that he has put the birds into some covert. You had markers, no doubt, in the probable course of flight, though a partridge flight is seldom very far. Let them rush, and do you rush, dogs and all, to the spot, and get at least one of the birds up again while the hawk remains overhead. There is no excuse in *partridge* hawking for not having a hawk that will make his point, as they say, over "put-in" quarry, because the distance is short enough for some one to be up in time with a spaniel, or long stick at least, to get the birds out. If this can be done before the hawk has left, for the first few times he puts in, he will gain confidence, and will ultimately wait with considerable patience, even should you be slow in your movements. In grouse hawking matters are different, for the flight is often a great deal too far, and the ground

too hilly, to make it possible to be up while the hawk remains. She therefore comes back, and you beat again. (This only by way of parenthesis.)

If the tiercel has killed at a distance, the markers will have been useful, and you will go at once to your bird.

It may be necessary to take the hawk down to the lure before he has killed (I mean after some failures), in order to move to other ground; but this should be avoided if possible, for, when he comes, you can scarcely give him anything—though you must give a little—he having to fly almost instantly; besides, frequently calling a hawk to the lure destroys his pitch, and, as he can hardly be fed at all, makes him careless of the lure. An old bird will follow you field after field till he does kill; but be careful how you tire a young hawk. Use your own judgment, and act according to circumstances. A tiercel used to partridge hawking will kill you a brace and a half or two brace in a morning; but this is too many to take from a very inexperienced bird. They should eat the head, or a couple of small mouthfuls from the neck, each time. The moment that is done—and it is perhaps done before you come up—hood the bird, and don't snatch the partridge away first, for that will lead to carrying.

Carrying is a most tiresome fault; but it is often, indeed almost always, the fault of the trainer rather than of the falcon. Some birds, it is true, seem to have a greater disposition to carry than others; and the smaller species of hawks (but we have not spoken of them at present) are worse in this particular than the larger. It is indeed a nuisance to find your bird pick up the quarry and make off with it, perhaps for the distance of two or three hundred yards, just as you approach your hand to seize it; and the tamest hawks may do this if they have been improperly treated. It is done from no fear of the falconer—at least, from no fear of his presence; the hawk's only suspicion is that she is about to be robbed; and she *has* been robbed, no doubt. You have taken her off the food in a

careless way, or you have, at any rate, failed to make her like the approach of your hand by forgetting to give her dainty bits from it while she was pulling at something pretty tough on the lure. You may also have allowed her to fly away with pieces of meat which you have imperfectly tied to the lure, or she may have carried a light lure and gorged herself from it. All these things provoke carrying. The greatest pains must be taken about them, for you can have no peace with a carrying hawk. If she should *drag*, but not attempt to fly with the pelt (or captured quarry), the possibility is that she does not know she can *fly* with it. She has fortunately been used to heavy lures, and thinks, after all, that she must feed where she is. Let us hope she will not eat of the tree of knowledge. Still, even dragging is not the thing; in some hawks it never occurs at all, and, with proper treatment, it will pass away with almost any. The best hawks I have had, the highest flyers, those free from screaming, the most noble in every way, have never seemed to know that there was such a thing as carrying; at any rate, it never occurred to them that any respectable peregrine could be such a beast as to attempt it.

I have said something about partridge hawking, but not perhaps quite enough. I have assumed that it is done with the tiercel as far as I have gone, and I confess my experience leads me rather—but not very much—to prefer the male bird in this sport. He is lighter and quicker at the turn than the falcon, and possibly gets into his speed a little sooner, if he is not high when the birds rise. But put me up a rather small falcon in a little breeze, a hawk that has been flown at grouse before, and that every fine day; and if she is not as good as any tiercel, the difference is not in the sex, but in some accident.

If birds are very wild, and won't lie to a point at all, you have your certain remedy with a high-flying hawk. Simply put him up before you enter the field, and when he is at his pitch

dash through it, getting the birds up as soon as you can. It is well that he should know the dogs, which he will do in a wonderfully short time, if they are allowed by degrees to go near his block when he is unhooded.

So much for partridge hawking with the peregrine. We now come to a nobler sport—we come to hill and heather, to longer flights, to higher winds, to stronger exertion. We come to the peregrine falcon herself, the female bird who is so much greater than her husband, so much stronger, I think so much nobler. I will not say that grouse have not been killed by trained tiercels, for I know to the contrary; that they are often killed by wild tiercels there is no doubt; but I am utterly and entirely for the falcon in grouse hawking, as the bird so easily entered to that quarry, and so thoroughly to be depended on in flying it. There is no flinching with the falcon, no seeming to slacken the pace as though she were afraid of hurting her foot with the blow; but there is downright, headlong, rapid, earnest, brave, honest, mighty chasing—there is the very character of commanding power in every hiss of her rushing bell, and in every stroke of her glorious wings. She goes into battle knowing that she will conquer; she hurries on the prize, as one who would only snatch her own; she comes down, an armed cruiser with all her sails, certain of the little craft that is bounding so quickly before her. Surely she is the queen of the wilderness and of the sky, the ruler of every creature beneath, the servant of but one above her! It is she to whom the winds are nothing, the hail nothing, the lightning on the mountains nothing—all these she defies; but man is her master, and I have seen her go out furiously at his bidding, or come down gently to his feet, out of the very clouds of heaven.

For the first few weeks in Scotland, and for the first few days in England, grouse will lie to a point. Wait for one, and put the falcon up, as directed in partridge hawking. But when birds are

very wild, get a few beaters, put the hawk up in a likely place, and when she is at her pitch get the grouse up as fast as you can. A wide-ranging dog, especially if you don't mind spoiling him a little, is most valuable for this work; but then your hawk should be a high-flyer. Consider the matter! If she is not a high-flyer, and birds are put up a couple of hundred yards from her, she has uncommonly little chance, especially after August. But, if she keeps a hundred yards or more above you, or above the dog, his range may be very considerable with great advantage; and, indeed, the hawk's presence in the air will help to keep the grouse down. With such birds as Aurora he might range half a mile, for that matter; but then, if Aurora has any fault, it is that she is *too* good. She, from her noble pitch, would fly, and probably kill, grouse sprung accidentally at a very great distance; she would kill out of reach of markers' vision. The direction would probably be known, and, with active men, she might be found in time; but she might *not* be found. Then, unless she comes next morning to the *live hack*, there is a chance of good bye altogether. It will be gathered, then, from all this that the game must be put up under a good hawk quickly, while, at the same time, neither dog nor beater should be so very far off her as to make the flight either impracticable or dangerous from its distance.

Markers, I am pretty sure, are necessary in grouse-hawking; certainly they are necessary on anything but a very flat moor—they are necessary with me here. The flight is soon over a hill out of your sight; the kill is in some ravine; the bell is not heard till you are very near: besides, the flight once over the hill, how do you know whether it goes straight on, or turns to the right or to the left, or (though this is rarely the case with game) comes quite back? Markers may not, and often do not, absolutely see the kill, but they know whereabouts it is; and if they see a "put in," there they are, to get the grouse up again before the falcon leaves the place. Of

course they should always be before your beat, and placed on the highest points. If they know for certain that there is a kill, they cry "who-whoop!" and this brings the falconer to the spot; if they are uncertain, they wait for the falconer to speak to them, which he will not do till he has stood still nearly ten minutes looking for the return of the falcon. If she is not back in a shorter time than that, she has killed. Then the marker near whom she flew is communicated with, and a search is made. It is often impossible for falconer and markers to hear each other—at any rate to hear any *sentence*, anything more than a falconer's cry. My markers, therefore, are instructed to point with one arm, just like a finger-post, the direction of the flight, and to insure the news of "who-whoop!" reaching its destination by the throwing up or waving a hat; waving is the best, and it must upon no account be done except in the case of a certain kill. If the hawk returns without success, she will wait on over the falconer and his beaters, frequently higher than she did the first time, and the process of beating is resumed.

The hawk should certainly be accustomed to some *cry* when the grouse rises, as her head may possibly be turned from the game. I shout, and so do the beaters, "Hooha, ha, ha!" as loud as I can; the falcon sweeps round in a moment, and is in instant pursuit. A cry may also be used to call her to you, such as "Hi away!" A loud and peculiar whistle, that to which she was accustomed at hack, is the best; only it rather bothers the dogs.

The directions given in partridge hawking as to taking up the bird, and so on, are good here. You may kill two or three grouse with a good peregrine, if you get up in time to prevent much eating of the quarry; and it is wonderful how long an eyess will stop on a grouse without even much disfiguring it. I constantly find a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes a mere nothing.

But then my birds are flown with a great deal of flesh on them. I want *weight*, to carry them through wind, and to carry them

steadily. I also want force, and the perfection of health. My friends tell me that I could not fly such fat birds were it not for my live hack, and I believe them.

Wood-pigeons are somewhat of a nuisance where they abound, but a good game hawk will soon leave them alone, unless they come very daringly near; in a partridge country, where they are often common, they soon save themselves in a wood, and the hawk returns to "waiting on." In a very open country they afford excellent sport; they come sometimes to the moors for bilberries. I will dismiss them here, as there is not anything very special to say about the mode of flying them; either falcon or tiercel will kill them. House pigeons may of course be flown from the hand, and the place of flying selected for its open country. Two hawks after a blue rock make no despicable sport; it is the coursing of the air.

But I must leave other flights and some other matters for the next chapter. Grouse and partridge hawking I shall once more notice, but only in a few paragraphs, and that when I speak of the haggard.

CHAPTER V.

HAGGARDS WITH GAME — CHICKENS AND EYESSES — HERON-HAWKING—ROOK-HAWKING—MAGPIE-HAWKING—PEWITS—WILD DUCKS—HOUSE PIGEONS.

At the end of the last chapter I was led for a moment from game to the wood pigeon : the truth was, the wood pigeon came necessarily in my way as a bird which occasionally leads game hawks from the right path, and, having once mentioned him, I thought I would dispose of him for ever. I had not, however, as I said, quite done with game-hawking.

The *haggard* peregrine, so good at herons and rooks, has lately been flown with great success at game. Some of these wild-caught hawks "wait-on" very high, and are always, from their long experience, good footers. But they are difficult birds to deal with. Many of them have to be kept low in flesh, which is certainly a misfortune, and their disposition to "self-hunting" is annoying. But again, like Aurora (a hawk mentioned before), some of them show excellent sport with grouse ; and no doubt the great objection to them lies in the danger of their being lost. I wrote to Robert Barr, the professional falconer, on this matter, not long since, and I will give an extract from his letter ; after that, I shall set down what I said to him in return. The extract is as follows : "Do not have haggards for game. I have one here. She waits on well and high, and kills grouse first-rate — yes, too well, as, if she goes out of sight, she has killed and eaten the grouse before she can be found in these wild deep glens ; and, before she is hungry, a grouse getting up under her, she will have it ; so she is lost." He means that she will kill for herself without the

smallest trouble; will take a second grouse almost before the first is thoroughly digested, and so on: this being the case, you will hardly have an opportunity of luring her, and not often one of seeing her on the wing. He continues: "I repeat, never have a haggard for game. I have had the best grouse-hawking this year, and killed the most grouse of any year since I began hawking; but what is the consequence? I have lost one haggard, and two other passage-hawks" (a wild-caught hawk in the *immature* plumage is spoken of often only as a "passage-hawk," not as a haggard)—"all three as good as any man ever had, but out of their place at game."

In answer to this I told him that I did not doubt he was right, and yet I would try. I would get a wild-caught falcon, and do all I could to enter her to my live hack; then fly her at grouse in the neighbourhood. But, after all, what can beat such eyesses as the Princess and Islay, or many other nestlings which I have trained and flown? If I ever have the opportunity of flying a haggard at grouse for any length of time, I will tell my readers the result.

I have now said all I intend to say about grouse and partridge hawking, except this hint. If an eyess should be very much disappointed in flying game before she has killed any, I recommend the following plan.* Before she declines flying it altogether, let your markers have each a brown chicken, about the size of the quarry, flown at; and if she should again "put in" her bird where it cannot easily be retrieved, let a chicken be thrown down to her in a string before she attempts to leave the spot. She must then be allowed to gorge on it, be hooded, and taken home. The string is necessary to prevent the chicken creeping into covert; but it must not be too much displayed. As for the chicken itself, if it is a tolerable representation in colour

* It should only, however, be adopted in extreme cases. See a caution towards the end of this chapter.

and size of the bird flown at, it will do; for the hawk, never having had such a bird in her feet, will easily be deceived. Of course, a live grouse or partridge, as the case may be, would be the proper thing; but it is difficult to obtain these, especially the former. But a good falconer, with fair material on his hands in the shape of hawks—especially if he have a covey scarcely full-grown to begin with—can have no occasion whatever for these artificial aids. You should learn to swim without the bladders.

It is now high time to speak of other flights than those with grouse and partridge.

Heron-hawking is the great sport, but I know it only from hearsay, and not from practice. Whilst grouse-hawking, indeed, a falcon of mine has more than once knocked a passing heron about, but I have never killed one. Haggards are used for the sport, though I think some eyesses would be equal to it; indeed, some few have, at odd times, killed herons.

Herons are hawked on what is called the "passage;" and not long ago there was a club in Holland—the Loo Club—whose members were very successful at this sport. By the "passage" is meant the passing of herons from the trees on which they build to their frog or fishing grounds, and the passing back again. Falconers are stationed at convenient parts of this passage, down wind of the heronry, on the look-out for returning birds, which are called "heavy," because they carry food; or some very daring man, with an excellent hawk, may even venture upon a "light" heron—*i.e.*, one going out to fish; but this is difficult and dangerous. I need, perhaps, scarcely say that the falcon, and not the tiercel, is used for this flight.

A quarter of a mile from the falconer, and a couple of hundred yards or so in the air, is the greatest distance a falconer ought to fly through—at any rate, as a rule. Herons have been killed with more law, but not often. Off go the hoods of two falcons when the

heron, on his way home, has passed the falconer a little. He disgorges his fish, he turns and goes down wind, making rings all the time in order to get above the hawks. They make rings too, and larger ones than his. One hawk is above the heron; she stoops, and hits or misses; in either case perhaps, but certainly in the former, both birds descend a little; but the second hawk has climbed up and stoops in her turn. After some blows there is a catch, both hawks "bind" to the quarry, and all three come down to the ground. Just before the ground is reached practised hawks loose their hold to save the bump, but make in again in a moment. You must ride at this sport, and that down wind, as fast as you can: the country is of course quite open. Danger to the hawk exists on the ground, scarcely ever during the flight, though even Sir Walter Scott has said so. If the heron is not *hors de combat* when the falconer comes up, the neck must be seized, and matters arranged as soon as possible. When heron hawks are ridden to, as they always should be, the heron is often found unhurt, or not seriously hurt: in that case, the hawks are fed on hot pigeon, held under a dead heron's wing, or even without that precaution if they are well-entered and practised birds; while the heron is restored to liberty, to fight or fly another day, and occasionally with a piece of copper bound round the leg, with the date, &c., of the capture—but this not till the hawks are hooded.

It is not to be supposed that every peregrine falcon will fly a heron the moment she sees him, or that one which does make for him at first will stick to him all through. As a rule, a great deal of trouble is taken to enter hawks thoroughly to this quarry, bagged herons being necessary.

Rook-hawking is, to a certain extent, a copy of heron-hawking; though no rook can go up as a heron goes before a falcon, or a lark before a merlin. I have killed with eyesses a good many old rooks, and that in a very difficult country; but my friends generally use

passage-hawks for this flight. Let me give my own experience first. I have found that there is a great deal of difference amongst falcons in their care to fly rooks. Some birds, but they are wonderfully in the minority, will go at them day after day, now losing them in trees, and now killing them—disappointed time after time, but sticking to them through everything. I speak of eyesses of my own experience. Others will fly eagerly at first, but, though they are tolerably successful, will give them up in time. And there are falcons that will hardly look at them at all, and can scarcely be brought to them even with bagged quarry.

However, most falcons, and some *few* tiercels, will fly rooks pretty well to begin with. Of course I speak of strong dashing birds, not tame things that have only been coddled; and, if they have been knocked about at grouse and wood pigeons, having been successful with these, they are none the worse for that—I think better.

Of course there is no "waiting on" in this sport, as there is none in heron-hawking, the hawk being flown from the fist; but it might perhaps be well, in some very few cases, to put the hawk up before the flock rises: that must be left to the falconer's judgment. The ordinary thing is to fly during passage, for rooks have a passage like herons.

If there are trees near, there should certainly be beaters, or a "field," if you like to call it so. But trees are a great nuisance; and, without going into what would be strictly called a wooded district, they may be so frequent as to make rook-hawking impossible. Rooks always make for trees. Many a time have I nearly run my life out, when I have not been well supported by others, or there have been no others, to get a rook out of a tree while the falcon remained. Stones won't always do it—not often: shouting is of little more use. A pistol is the best thing, and there are cases when even that requires a little shot over the powder. A rook, however, as we all know, is very frightened at anything

like the report of a gun, and I have generally found powder answer.

To *keep* hawks to rooks—and I learn this from my friends who use passage-hawks; I have not done it in my own practice—it is sometimes necessary to give them washed meat; meat, in fact, soaked for many hours in water, till it looks white and sodden. This is the "unbloody" crop; the "bloody" crop, for which the wretched birds must long, is only to come from the rook itself. The yellow goes from a hawk's legs and feet, and some of the gloss from her feathers, under this regimen; and, indeed, the falconers will say, "This bird is not fit for rooks—her feet are *yellow*." The yellow and the gloss are signs of health; but it can't be helped, I suppose. I never went into this kind of thing myself, and have been contented with high-fed falcons (one taken out of several), that flew rooks because they liked it.

Just to guard against any mistake, let me say that the yellow does not appear on the cere (the wax-like formation above the upper mandible), nor perhaps to its full extent on the legs and feet, in very young eyesses.

I had one falcon that really liked the flesh of rooks, but this is uncommon; and it is a good plan, after the bird has broken into the breast, to give a piece of nice beefsteak or a fowl's leg under the rook's wing. Once, when the falcon I have alluded to was eating a rook's breast, I saw a shot deep in it, which I of course took out. The rook was in health and fat. I also once found a shot in a most healthy hawked grouse while I myself was eating it. Supposing I had given this bird to a friend as a *hawked* grouse, and he had found the shot, what would he have said of me?

Magpie-hawking is a sport so well established among falconers that I must not omit it. Tiercels are the birds for this cunning, shifting quarry, as they can turn in a smaller space than a falcon can, and are what may be called "handy." Eyesses are by far the

most easily managed, and when in constant practice nothing can beat them. This is certainly not a sport to be undertaken singlehanded; you can't go out with your tiercel on your fist unattended if there is to be a hope of success—unless, indeed, in unusual cases—for magpies, as a rule, are found in the neighbourhood of trees and hedges. There may be here and there a common where they may be seen, and which is so broad that a hawk may kill them before they can reach covert; but, even if such a place could easily be found, it would hardly be chosen for the sport. What is wanted is a good grass country, tolerably free from wood; here and there a tree, large inclosures, and neatly-kept fences. The magpie should have a refuge, in this place and that, but no covert must be so great that he can be lost in it. The flight should be run after by some, and ridden after by others; for both horsemen and footmen are very useful to drive the quarry from a hedgerow, bush, or tree. When he takes to a hedge, let him be well pressed from *both* sides of his position—*i.e.*, let some of the field be above and some below him, each party beating and approaching the other. The moment he leaves he will be stooped at, first by one hawk, then by another (for two are used), and he will require the attention of several persons to keep him from covert, or rather to put him out of it. Once thoroughly in the broad open, he is easily killed. I need not say he has no speed, for everyone knows that; but he has cunning and adroitness almost beyond belief. Several magpies may be taken in a day with a cast (two) of peregrines, or, indeed, even with one hawk. With *pewits* trained hawks can do nothing. They may fly them at first, but they soon give them up — the dodging is too much for any bird; and yet wild peregrines will occasionally take them, and a man saw one of my hack hawks kill one easily. But all trained hawks, except a few of the very best, will do better by themselves—*i.e.*, when they have left you for an

hour or two—than they will when you are in the act of flying them.

I never flew a hawk at a *wild duck*, I am sorry to say; but anyone who has passed through anything like the falconry I have just written about, will have no difficulty with this quarry. The falcon should be used, eyess or haggard, and she might possibly want entering. The danger is of the duck diving; but on marshes the sport might be excellent.

I mentioned *house pigeons* above, but only in passing. If you can get over the notion of having had them in your pocket or basket, they will show excellent sport; and there is no reason whatever why a hawk thoroughly entered to game should not fly them. The only delicacy is with those unentered. On the contrary, they exercise a hawk famously, and make her practise all her stoops and twists. Fly at them alternately with game, and welcome. But, if you have no opportunity for game-hawking, you may fall back on pigeons with advantage. I have often amused —nay, very much interested—myself and my friends by taking the hawks from the blocks, and flying them at my dovecote pigeons. Many a time hawk and quarry have been lost in the clouds, for some pigeons ring beautifully; and then the rush down for home, when she has well beaten them in the air, is really very fine, and I have seen hawks make magnificent practice while at it. The misfortune is that after a time the pigeons refuse to stir from the roof.

CHAPTER VI.

OTHER FLIGHTS—THE JERFALCON—MERLINS—THE GOSHAWK—THE SPARROWHAWK — THE BATH — IMPING — COPING — THE BRAIL — MOULT — DISEASES — HAGGARDS — LOST HAWKS — LIVE PIGEONS—CONCLUSION.

THERE are of course a few flights with the peregrine besides those which I have named, but the falconer, knowing others, will easily manage them. Pheasants, for instance, may be taken with most falcons, if found far enough from covert; and woodcocks may be taken with either falcon or tiercél, if excellent hawks, on a moor, perhaps on the edge of a bank near a burn, where I have occasionally found them. It must be left to the falconer's judgment in such cases whether he flies from the air or from the fist: a hawk is of course in the best position when waiting on; and, if the quarry is well marked down, this is easily arranged. But woodcocks, as all sportsmen know, are not always easy to find, mark them as you will.

With the exception of a very few words which I may have to say about haggards, I now with regret dismiss the peregrine, to make room for other hawks. My space is full short.

Of the *jerfalcon* I know nothing from practice, and I shall not enter here into the question of a difference of species between the Iceland, Greenland, and Norway birds. I will only say that *I* believe in it, and that in very good company. I was determined not to write a line on natural history in what I intended for a purely practical treatise on falconry; and it will be found that I have hardly written half a dozen such lines. The jerfalcons are used for herons, grouse, rooks, hares, even for partridges, and they wait

on well. They will take hares fairly, especially with the assistance of a rather slow and well-broken dog, just to keep the hare going; any mongrel will do.* They are magnificent birds—powerful of course from their size, fairly tractable, swift, and moderately successful. I am told the fault is in a want of quickness in the turn, but they go very fast straight on end. I may have done them injustice, but I speak of nothing of which I know nothing; and I am blindly bigoted: I am altogether for the peregrine.

Of *merlins* I know a great deal; I can't be modest here, for I have flown them year after year with very considerable success. I have killed quantities of wild skylarks, many thrushes, a very few blackbirds, some ring-ouzels, and a great many house pigeons with them, besides accidental pipits and such like. It is fortunate for me that I have said a good deal about these little hawks in the first chapter of "How I became a Falconer." They are treated during hack just as the peregrine is treated; not allowed perhaps to to remain at liberty quite so long, and taken up either by hand or with the bow-net. They are delicate, and should be fed twice a day—never on tough food; neither must they be allowed to bolt their food in large pieces. I have seen even a great screaming peregrine, always hungry, though eating half as much again as another, lose her digestion for a whole day through bolting immense pieces of beef. Beef chopped to a paste, with a little water, is excellent for all hawks. Merlins, however, should have plenty of birds, alive or dead; if alive, take care they are not of a sort likely to draw the hawk from the quarry at which she is in the habit of flying; if dead, beware of shot in them. Merlins need not be hooded much; it is better that they should not be. Great care must be taken to prevent

* Lord Lilford tells me that he dislikes the Iceland birds: the Greenlanders are the second best; the Norwegian best of all. Icelanders he considers sulky, and anything but clever.

them "carrying"—a fault to which they are peculiarly liable. A thin rod, shutting up like a telescope, with a sort of claw at the end, to place, but very carefully, upon the captured lark in the hawk's feet, with a small ring opposite the claw, to which a tempting piece of beefsteak is fastened, helps the falconer sometimes. Unless badly trained, it is only when the hand approaches very small quarry that these little fellows will think of moving. Merlins are not taught to "wait on," though they might be in a measure; it is not wanted for their flights. I have flown snipe with these birds, as also with the peregrine, and have had many "puts in" with both, but have never killed. Nor have I killed a full-grown partridge with a merlin, but it has been done. I really never *stuck to it* thoroughly.

Bagged larks to merlins, bagged rooks to peregrines, should never be ostentatiously thrown up *as* bagged; for if they are, you must not expect your hawks to look at wild quarry. Shorten the flight perhaps of your bagged bird, but try to let it appear wild. Bagged quarry is good under certain circumstances, but much delicacy and judgment is required in giving it. When a merlin has "put in" lark after lark, a bagged lark in a string (when the wild one cannot be retrieved) is excellent. And, to make "putting-in" probable, instead of flying two merlins at an October lark, fly *one*, so as to drive the lark down; for, not finding a second enemy underneath, he may come down into a hedge; then give your bagged bird—*i.e.*, of course, unless you soon get the one flown at.

We now come to *goshawks*, but these will also be found to have a place in "How I became a Falconer." The great matters are to carry them, and (if possible) get them carried by a trustworthy person, some few hours a day in all, very soon after they are received, to keep the bow-perch in a tolerably public place—of course on grass, and to call the bird often to the fist from a wall or gate, increasing the distance, and using a string at first. They will come

with tattered, but I hope without deficient feathers; for feathers knocked clean out are scarcely ever properly replaced at the next moult, though they *may* be afterwards: I have known cases where they have been, and where they have not been; and this applies to all hawks. It is rather a clear corollary, therefore, that broken feathers must not be pulled out; this does with pigeons, but not with hawks. We *imp* broken feathers, as I shall mention presently.

When the goshawk is tame and in "yarak," give her bagged quarry: she will immediately afterwards fly that which is wild, but not kill with equal ease at first. I think the plumage of the adult bird very beautiful, and infinitely finer than the first. All this is a matter of taste, but to my mind the adult plumage in all hawks is finer than the immature. For this, however—*i. e.*, for what such plumage really is—I send my friends, if they are ignorant, to books of ornithology. Macgillivray and Yarrell are most trustworthy, and I admire the former exceedingly. Perhaps, however, I may just mention that in the female sparrowhawk and in the female merlin, especially in the merlin, very little difference is perceptible.

The *sparrowhawk* is trained in the same way as the goshawk, and is perhaps even more difficult than that bird to get into flying order. With the female, young partridges, and even old ones, may be taken at the beginning of the season, or at any time when you can get near them. This bird, like the goshawk, has more power from a tree than from the fist; but I would never encourage flying from trees. One of these birds once perched, may perch for a long time out of your reach, and careless of lures. The sparrowhawk is far too small to fly at fur, neither is it her habit to do so. The best sport is with blackbirds, and the male or the female may be used; the latter I prefer. When the quarry takes to covert, it is o be driven out as quickly as possible, the hawk meanwhile coming to the fist, or taking her place on a tree. If it has taken shelter in a hedge, the same tactics must be used as those recommended in

magpie-hawking. Sparrowhawks may be broken to the hood, but should seldom wear it.

Both the goshawk and the sparrowhawk are *short-winged hawks*, and do not wait on, but fly from the fist.

All hawks must have a *bath* offered them—in the summer every other day, in the winter less frequently. They may be fastened for bathing near a shallow brook, or may have broad and shallow baths placed near their bathing-blocks, and sunk in the ground. They will dry themselves in the sun. Do not let them bathe too near night.

If the long feathers of the wings or the tail feathers are broken, they must be *imped*. This is done with needles, which differ of course in length and size, according to the kind of hawk to be imped. The needle for the wing-feather of a peregrine may be more than an inch in length (all the needles are three-sided); it tapers to points. Select from feathers you have by you, generally saved from the moult of other hawks, the one which matches in number and size that which you desire to imp. Cut obliquely with a very sharp knife the real and false feathers, so that they will most accurately join, having taken pains to get the true length of the feather, which is a somewhat difficult matter. Dip the needle into brine, so that it may rust when all is completed. Insert half of the needle into the false and half into the true feather; push hard till you can hardly perceive the mark of division; indeed, if the thing is well done it is difficult to see it at all. Be careful not to cut the real feather too high, or you will get into the quill, and the needle will not hold; nor too low, or the feather will break. If the feather is broken very near the quill, and the needle will not hold, cut the quill carefully, and insert, with a little patent glue, a piece of feather stripped of the web, of a size to fit the quill closely, and into that push the needle. I can only add that I hope my readers will seldom have the trouble of imping at all.

The point of the upper mandible often becomes too long, and sometimes a split is caused. Cut off the point with a pair of wire nippers, and use a sharp penknife to touch up the work. This is called *coping*. Of course in all these matters the hawk must be held by an assistant.

The *brail* I have never used, nor do I think it is employed by many falconers. I will copy what is said about it from "Falconry in the British Isles:" "It is simply a strip of soft leather about half an inch in breadth, tapering towards either end; a slit of about two inches long is made down the centre of the strip. Through this slit is put the joint of the hawk's wing, whilst the wing is closed; one end of the leather is brought under the wing, and tied to the other end above it. By this means the wing is retained in its natural position, whilst the bird is at the same time prevented from using it." The brail is used for very restive hawks when they are first taken up.

And now we come to the *moult*. Eyesses in the first plumage drop the first feather (the seventh in the wing) sooner than older birds. In the warm counties of England this sometimes happens as soon as the end of March or beginning of April; but my birds, here in Cheshire, seldom begin their moult till the 1st of May. A bird kept very fat and warm moults sooner than one hard-worked and more or less exposed. With young eyesses the feathers are not fully replaced until the middle of October, or somewhere about that time. Haggards, and all old hawks, are considerably later. The usual practice is to "put the hawk up to moult," as they call it, *i.e.*, to keep her on the block, or loose in a warm loft, gorging her daily, from March till November. But for some years I have not scrupled to fly grouse with hawks still in the moult; and all through the summer I have given my moulting hawks some exercise every week or ten days, with lure or pigeon. For myself, I can't endure the notion of the birds doing nothing, sitting on their blocks like parrots in cages

for more than half the year! They *must* take harm, I am sure, by doing so, both in health and in flight. With regard to health, though the confined birds appear pretty well, it takes some weeks or not far short of such a time, to get them into flying condition after the end of moult. The old falconers thought so, at least; they were most exacting in their demands on this point; and modern practice, though it in some measure disobeys the old falconers, is compelled not altogether to ignore them. Look at Latham, in the middle of the seventeenth century, or sooner: "For there is no man that can make a hawk that is drawn from the mew ready to be flown under five or six weeks, if she be a full hawk." Too soon put on the wing at quarry, after months of excessive fatness, she would be "full of grease and glut," as they used to say—would "melt grease," &c. The best possible way, no doubt, would be to moult our hawks at hack, perhaps with heavy bells; but the risk would be very considerable. However, in my opinion, weekly exercise through moult is good for the bird's health, and makes them continue to be *adroit*. Of the latter I think a great deal. I am assured, on very valuable authority, that hawks do not even require *hack*, for a bird, though flying wretchedly when first put on the wing, will, at the end of a week of constant flying, go like a wild one. *Perhaps* so, as far as flying straight on end is concerned; but I cannot bring myself to think that it will turn and foot like a wild one. I do not think that an unhacked bird can ever be so adroit as a hacked bird, even if I grant equal powers of straight flying; nor can I conceive that six or seven months of absolute idleness during moult does not set its mark for evil both on health and ability. And, with regard to not flying an old grouse-hawk in August or September because it is in the *moult*, all I can say is that I can't afford to lose the services of my old birds. Were I to shut them up till their moult was perfect, and they themselves in what is called "flying order," the 10th of December would

be upon me almost before I knew where to turn ; nay, in many cases it would be gone by altogether. In short, for the first part and the best part of the grouse season, you must either fly moulting hawks, or kill with nothing but eyesses of the year. And I would rather risk (what I should conceive to be) the *very* rare accident of the loss of a young and soft feather than leave my favourites on the blocks while I went up the hill with young birds.

Diseases amongst hawks are not of common occurrence, if the birds are properly managed.

Cramp is commonly caused by the birds having been taken from the nest too soon, and is often fatal. An old goshawk of mine once had it, through having been left out in the snow and tempest. She was almost cured by goose grease rubbed in. For the young birds try warmth ; but it is rarely of use.

Fits sometimes attack hawks, but I never saw one except in one of the smaller species. Purge with rhubarb ; four grains for a large peregrine, and so in proportion. Give light food well chopped.

The *kecks* is a sort of cough, which peregrines have sometimes. Give a little cayenne pepper in the food, or some six or seven bruised peppercorns in the castings.

The *frounce* comes from wet and damp to hawks *not at liberty*. The tongue is swollen, and a moisture is seen about the beak. It is infectious. Scrape off the diseased coating of the tongue with a sharp quill, and touch the bleeding part well with burnt alum and lemon-juice, or burnt alum and vinegar.

Inflammation of the crop.—Very serious. The bird holds its head straight up, elongating the neck, and is sick. Do not hood ; give no castings. For remedies, rhubarb and chopped meat—very little at a time. A hawk may be sick from indigestion, and yet have no inflammation.

Worms.—Rub river sand on the meat several times, then a dose of rhubarb.

Fractures.—A broken leg or wing may be set. I should ask the family surgeon to help me.

Parasites.—The *flying tick*, found sometimes on peregrines, and especially on merlins, will soon leave them. *Lice* come from such quarry as rooks. They generally leave after a few baths; but you may have to blow sulphur under the feathers. The *red mite* is the worst of all, it burrows in the nares; but the hawks of a man who keeps them clean can hardly be troubled with it, unless by contagion. A decoction of tobacco and spirit should be applied with a camel's hair pencil.

Only two or three lines more, to supply omissions. If a *haggard peregrine*, or any passage peregrine, is sent you, the course is as follows (I copy it from a letter of Robert Barr's): "When she has fed freely through the rufter hood" (a hood through which she can easily eat, and a little differing from the ordinary one), "fit her with a hood proper, and keep her on the hand day and night" (people, of course, do this in turns), "unhooding her very seldom, and late at night, for two or three weeks. If the bird shows symptoms of being tame, she may be put on a perch, but hooded very early each morning. She should be let pull through the hood as much and as long as possible. When she will feed unhooded, and is tame enough to take out of doors, tie her to a peg, and let her jump to your fist; if she does this, get a small fowl (or if you don't want her to fly at herons, a pigeon), and let her go to it when fastened near her; take her off on a pulling (a fowl's leg, &c.), carry her quietly into the house, and hood her in the dark. Repeat this until you can let her loose; then give her all the flying and stooping at the lure you can, after this enter her to quarry," &c.

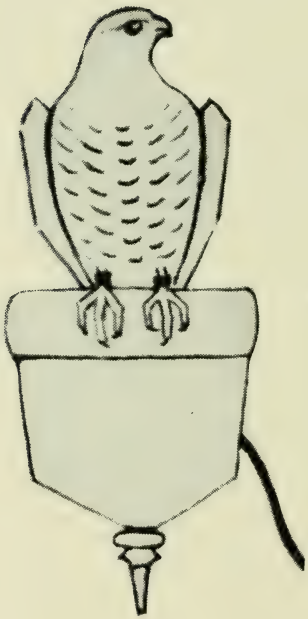
Lost hawks, if they are not found on the live hack near the house next morning, must be sought far and near with lure and shout.*

* Where they were lost in the first instance, as I have said before.

If they have been out some time they may require the bow-net; but hawks differ in this respect, some letting you take them up easily after a fortnight's absence, some getting comparatively wild by that time—at least wild for the moment; after a day or two on the block they will be found as tame as ever.

In speaking of the use of *live pigeons*, I desire to avoid recommending the practice of cruelty. I always use the dead lure when I can; and the life of a pigeon in a falcon's foot is generally so short, that the death can hardly be more painful than that which comes, in the ordinary course, from age or accident. As for chickens, they must be given very sparingly, and, if possible, not given at all, for there is such a thing as involuntarily entering a falcon to the fowls of a farmyard. I hate a hen-killing bird.

My task is now quite finished. I hope I have done my duty to my readers; for, if ever there was a man utterly sick of writing the rudiments, tired to death of teaching the ὁ, ἡ, τὸ of falconry, I am that man. And yet I so dearly love the sport, that if I find I have helped anyone to understand it, and to practise it with pleasure, I shall forget the torture in remembering the cause.



HOW I BECAME A FALCONER.*

CHAPTER I.

FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH KESTRELS, SPARROWHAWKS, MERLINS—EARLY NOTES ON FLYING THE MERLIN—MY OLD ENTHUSIASM.

I DON'T know whether I have at all succeeded, but I have certainly endeavoured to repeat myself as little as possible in anything I have written on the subject of falconry, both here and elsewhere. I am conscious, however, that it is difficult to avoid even the old expressions—and some of the old matter is of course unavoidable—in writing upon a subject which the author has worn almost threadbare. Nevertheless, I only hope that what I am about to do will not be considered an impertinence—not the thrusting of an unsavoury morsel down reluctant throats—not the appearing again on the stage before an audience long ago quite tired of me, and disposed to hiss me off.

I had the thing born in me, I believe, for I cannot remember that I read any books on hawking when I was at school; and yet it was then that I was determined, if possible, to train a hawk to fly birds. I had, however, read the "Swiss Family Robinson," and thought Fritz a very clever fellow to train the Malabar eagle as he did, though I now know that he did so in a perfectly impossible way. I have not the most feeble notion what is meant by a Malabar eagle;

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* The chapters entitled "How I became a Falconer" were published in THE FIELD before the little treatise on "Practical Falconry." This has been mentioned before, but it may be as well to notice it again in this place.

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but the flight with flamingoes must have been a glorious one indeed. I remember the account of it lighted the tinder hidden somewhere in my heart, and it has certainly blazed away since with more than a sufficient flame.

My first essay was with a kestrel, which I believed (in common with a good many others, I fancy) to be a sparrowhawk. I hooded him, poor fellow, with a black velvet hood, manufactured, to my order, by my mother's maid. This hood was little more than a bag tightened by a piece of tape, and it made the bird's eyes water, for it hung upon them. I did not know at that time that hoods must be stiff, and made upon a block. The kestrel disappointed me very much, for he was frightened out of his wits at a live starling, and would not always kill a sparrow. He got tame, it is true; but, though I sat up with him surreptitiously, night after night, till I was dreadfully fagged, in order to keep him awake—as I had heard from my friends, and from some book I at this time got sight of, I ought to do—he flew away in the most natural manner the first time I gave him his liberty. I tried several kestrels, but one was as bad as the other, and it was not till some time later that I knew how even the most skilful care, had it been mine to give, would have been thrown away upon birds which, though easily tamed, do not *chase*.

Then I got a sparrowhawk, which went through the usual process of getting his legs entangled in the imbecility of a temporary paralysis, falling off the fist the moment he was placed upon it, and hanging by his leash like a dead bird. Still I stuck to him well, and hardly ever lost my temper. I made allowances for his ill-humour, and tried to look to the future when I should reap my reward; but that future never came. Some accident happened to the bird, and he was never put on the wing at all.

Some years passed, and I got a whole nest of sparrowhawks. I put them in an apple tree, in an open hamper with straw, the lid forming a platform. I fed them periodically on beefsteak, sounding

a loud whistle during the process; I let them fly at hack, and took them up with a net; I carried two of them a good deal, putting such jesses as I could make upon their legs, and using a leash with a spring swivel. All this was a wonderful improvement. It is not, I think, necessary to hack sparrowhawks; but I certainly committed no fault in doing so—I was right rather than wrong. Had I only known how necessary it is to keep these hawks (unhooded) in the constant presence of children, strangers, dogs, and so forth, I think it very likely that I should have had something like a perfect success; as it was, I rejoiced my heart by killing young house pigeons, thrown up from the hand, with some of the female birds when they were in in a respectable humour, both hawk and quarry being at perfect liberty.

About this time I made one of the most agreeable friendships of which it has ever been my good fortune to boast, which has existed for more than sixteen years, and is now based upon matters of more importance than falconry. My friend lived then in Northumberland, and I made the journey from Northamptonshire to see him. He showed me both the peregrine and merlin on the wing, and on the block; and it may be easily imagined that I got all the information on hawking subjects I could extract. My visit lasted a fortnight, so I had plenty of opportunity. My friend also presented me with a female merlin, "Pearl" by name—one of the best hawks I ever possessed. I went home to fly Pearl at pigeons and larks, to procure nestling merlins when the season came and also more sparrowhawks. Now I began to feel something like confidence in myself, and I was in fact becoming a falconer. Still I had an immense deal to learn; I had only seen the smaller hawks, and those chiefly when I was entirely without instruction. But I procured five or six merlins, gave them a long hack, and trained them with very considerable success—the females to pigeons, the males to larks. Year after year I flew merlins in Northamptonshire and (afterwards) in Cheshire:

and, when at last I brought the sport of lark-flying to a point as near perfection as I think it can attain, or as any other falconer has brought it, I used female as well as male birds for that flight, being certain that they have the less tendency to despair under disappointment. Merlins, of all hawks, are the most liable to give up in the face of discouragement. They are very courageous birds, as far as attacking large quarry is concerned, and it is wonderful that such little creatures can capture and kill a pigeon; but they certainly will not go up into the skies time after time, when they are losing their larks. I have seen the truth of this year after year; and when the Barrs tried merlins at larks not very long ago, and were delighted with them to begin with, I told my friend "Captain Falconer" that their enthusiasm would subside a little towards the middle of September. And so it did. About the 8th of September skylarks have got over the moult, are in full feather nearly, and are almost ready to go up, before a fast cast of merlins, singing into the clouds.

I don't know whether it is bad taste in me to refer to "Mount Carmel;" * but it was the Rev. Josiah Worzel of that book who, having seen my merlins leave their larks halfway, offered his advice upon the subject, and not very stupid advice either. For Mr. Worzel, more a farmer than a priest, was not altogether a fool; and he really took some little interest in falconry. He never met me at one time without saying in his own charming and modest manner, which, as will be seen, rather omitted than assumed anything—"Well, 'Peregrine, 'ow's the 'awk?" He told me he thought I ought not to unhood in bright sunlight. This has nothing in the world to do with merlins *leaving* their quarry; but a long experience has taught me that he was in a measure right, for it is much better

* Mount Carmel: a Tale of Modern English Life. Richard Bentley, New Burlington-street, 1867.

to carry merlins unhooded when they are really in the field. My plan has been this: I have unhooded just before entering the field, and have then carried a hawk on each hand, holding the tips of the jesses. It is wonderful how the little birds stand on the *qui vive*, turning their heads sharply at the least movement of a leaf, and ready to start into full swing at the rising of a lark. Just in this way, though not so lightly, the goshawk sits on the glove, when she is in real earnest, and prepares to dash off as you kick each bush for a rabbit. But of the goshawk I shall speak in another chapter.

At first I used to keep my merlins too long at hack. I thought, and rightly thought, that it was better to have three or four clever, active birds, with strong muscles, than five or six that had only been on the wing for a week; but I forgot how unfair it is to suppose that keepers *can* protect little hawks, even from their own guns. The bells may not be heard, and the size of a merlin on the wing is so nearly that of the kestrel and sparrowhawk, that, unless a keeper is very careful indeed, he may destroy your property without at all meaning to do so. Peregrines are such large birds, so different from what keepers call "the country hawks," that they can hardly ever be killed by a man who has instructions to preserve them, unless he is a rogue; but merlins, as I have said, have not the protection of size. These little hawks, then, while it is necessary that they should run some risk of their lives, need not be rashly exposed. The longer they are out, the more they are in danger; and, indeed, if they are out too long—unless the bells are so weighty as to injure them—they will prey for themselves, and so leave you. Give them a good three weeks, and be thankful if you take them up at the end of that time uninjured.

I wish heartily that I had kept a journal, of late years, on hawking matters; but it is a long time since I set down any incident belonging to the sport. Still, I have page after page of *first* experiences, to which my friends are very welcome. They are the enthusiastic

records of a young falconer's practice, and may amuse young falconers now.

These for instance:—"1852. Feb. 19. Pearl's (a female merlin) first flight in Northamptonshire. Very cold N.W. wind. Turned her pigeon several times, but it was ultimately blown away from her. She came back well to the lure." "Feb. 23. Pearl made a beautiful flight after a powerful pigeon, from the stone bridge in Boughton Park. She flew in earnest for half a mile, and quite out of sight. The pigeon beat her, going down wind. She made a brilliant stoop to the lure of several hundred yards, over some high trees." "Feb. 26. Pearl killed her pigeon after a flight of a few hundred yards. Drove it into a ditch, and strangled it." Then came a few unsuccessful flights. And then—"March 6. Pearl drove her pigeon into the water, after striking it down. The pigeon was picked up under the bank, from whence it dared not move." Unsuccessful flights again. Then—"March 18. An excellent flight. Pearl followed very close, and the birds went quite out of sight, taking over Dainty's Fields for Weekly Hall Wood. I could not keep them in view by running. Pearl evidently killed; she was repeatedly striking the pigeon when I last saw her. After an hour's waiting she came back to me to Dainty's Field, from whence she started. Her jesses and talons were covered with wet blood. I hunted for the pigeon afterwards, but could not find it; probably killed in the wood." "I flew Pearl almost every day since the last account was written, at pigeons or to the lure, but latterly at larks. She chased these birds into the sky till she was often all but lost to view, always coming back beautifully to hand, though I kept her high fed, as the moulting time had almost commenced." "On this day—April 23—I lost her!"

There; perhaps that will do! The last entry is disagreeable to me even now.

One year my young merlins roosted on the trees of a small clump

which had one rook's nest, or, as it was some little distance from the rookery, it might have been a carrion crow's nest, for my ornithology was not very general at that time. I spared the birds when they built, laid, and hatched, and they rewarded me by persecuting my merlins, then only just able to fly, and by pecking out the eye of a fine female bird.

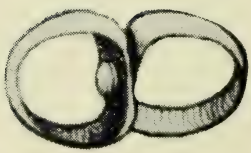
At that time I was merlin-mad, and would have given up a day's pheasant shooting for one ringing flight at a lark. I did something with sparrowhawks, but not very much, for the others took my time.

Presently "Falconry in the British Isles" was published, my Northumberland friend being one of the authors; the admirable lithographs being of his own execution, and taken from his own drawings. This book increased my zeal for falconry, and I very soon made a first essay with the peregrine. I began with a tiercel sent to me from Scotland, and, though he was not a good one, thanks no doubt in a measure to myself, I began to prefer this hawk to either of the other species I have named. In short, I was more enthusiastic than ever. It appeared to me a great injustice that birds, made, as I thought, for the use of man—as the horse and dog are made—should be tortured in traps, killed at the eyrie, outlawed, treated as vermin; in short, hunted to death throughout the kingdom. I knew that they were bold, dashing, tractable, capable of some attachment, excellent in their beauty, surpassing all creatures in their swiftness; that they were, after all, the very princes of the air, the aristocracy of the things that fly. Moreover, I had called them out of the clouds to my feet; I had reared them, fed them, made them my servants and my friends. In them I had "dominion over the fowls of the air." And I remembered what they *once* were; how, in times as hearty as these, and more noble, they stood first of all amongst the instruments of the chase.

I thought I would defend them. I almost smile now at my notion

that there was a chivalry in this, for which I should be thanked. But I felt that they were discarded only because they were out of sight, and I wished to bring them back again, to place them thoroughly before the gaze of others. I was sanguine enough to think that, with my own pen, I could give them once more a place in the world.

I failed. I did not sufficiently take into consideration the physical change which has, in the last hundred years, passed over the face of the country. Neither, perhaps, did I enough remember this singular truth: that sport in Britain, especially in England, is not now as of old, permitted to depend chiefly upon toil, courage, endurance, uncertainty, and skill, but is the child of ease and luxury, and the love of slaughter—artificial in its appliances, and looking to the result with a grasping eagerness which ought to belong only to the means.



CHAPTER II.

SPORT—HAWKS FRIGHTENING GAME FROM THE LAND—PERMISSION TO FLY AT GROUSE—BLACK CLOUD.

I CAN quite understand those persons who say that falconry is a mere pastime up to a certain point; though I don't quite believe them. To me it was *sport* to see a cast of merlins fly right up into the sky after a lark; even to see a pigeon taken by a merlin when the flight was good. But I confess that I have modified many of my opinions in the matter of falconry. For instance, I have in a measure changed my notions with respect to the love of the peregrine for grouse. That a hawk, I believe now, bred on a grouse moor, takes to this quarry naturally, and with delight; and what I retain is—and what I shall ever retain is only—that she, on the whole, is a grand institution of nature; and this, looking at the matter entirely from a *shooter's* point of view, because she strikes out disease, stamps it out, when first it shows its hideous head upon the moors.

But if I can *now* understand those persons who look on falconry, up to a certain point, only as a pastime, my notions being on this head somewhat changed—if I can see that the killing of larks and blackbirds is an occupation which possibly can hardly claim for itself the distinguished term of "sport," be it done this way or that—I still hold, and ask every true sportsman to hold with me, this truth, viz., that when game (or a large bird such as a heron) is killed in the chase, by creatures tutored by man to pursue it, *there is "sport."*

I look back to my merlin days, much as I like to look back on them, a little as upon one's schoolboy days. Merlin-flying is

sport; but not, perhaps, an accepted sport. I am quite content to put it so.

But the peregrine; the goshawk! A great falconer said to me many years ago: "It is all very well our saying this and that; merlins are enchanting, most wonderful in what they do; but the peregrine is the bird for *us*." And I don't wish to make any bones about it; the peregrine has certainly been the bird for me.

And yet it is just because one part of falconry is little more than a pastime perhaps, while the other part is a thorough sport, that we find a difficulty. Go beyond the pastime, deal effectively with the larger hawks, and you come to something serious. If a man flies sparrowhawks and merlins, he will want time, it is true—he will want patience, skill, and so on; but he will not want expense nor preserved land; neither will he create jealousies, running the risk of engendering quarrels. And yet, when you have flown the smaller birds, ten to one you are not content without flying the larger—that is, if you have anything like the opportunity. We all know, or knew once, that the stream, so small at its source, acquires strength in its progress, and receives many tributaries on its way.

If a man has no land of his own fit for hawking game on, and does not intend to rent any, I think he should content himself with the small hawks. I do not in this instance practise what I preach, as I shall show presently; but I know how common the belief is that the presence of the peregrine drives game from the land. I am positive that it does not; but if the man from whom you ask permission to hawk, or who gives you the privilege unsolicited, thinks it does, you are receiving a favour from him, the extent of which it is almost impossible to calculate. Shoot for him sometimes, and welcome—and it may even answer to him to ask you; but do anything to drive the game from his manor, and you are certainly not fit to be on the land at all. I could not excuse this myself; I could not tolerate it in the least; it is not in human nature, nor neces-

sarily in gentlemanlike courtesy, to permit it for a moment. And, therefore, I think, as a *rule*, that the man who has not game of his own, had better have nothing to do with the peregrine.

I never flew the artificial hawk when shooting, to make the birds lie. They tell me that it drives, at any rate, partridges from the ground. I don't know. I don't deny it; I simply don't *know*. I don't deny it, because I can't refuse to receive what any gentleman, or any honest keeper or labourer, tells me on his word; I don't know it, as I have seen nothing of the sort, and as those who assert it may possibly be mistaken. But there is something else—I really don't care about it; and I don't care about it because I have flown the peregrine falcon pretty often at game—industriously for nearly a dozen years—and (by some sort of accident, I suppose, for I am not such an idiot as to claim anything else) I have found the land on which I have hawked rather specially full of game than otherwise, and this both in a particular part of a particular manor, and in many different counties in England. There is nothing in this; I claim nothing—probably my fancy has run away with me; but to the following belief I am ready solemnly to set my hand. It is this: That if at one time a couple of men were to pass over a moor shooting, and at another time a couple of men were to pass over the same moor hawking, there would not be the smallest difference in the frights which the game had received, as far as its *leaving the land is concerned*. The birds are there the day after hawking, just as they are the day after shooting; the only difference is that they lie better after the former than after the latter sport.

And yet game is driven from the ground by the artificial hawk! Perhaps so. The onus is hardly with me, one way or another. But if the fact is certain, as it may be, I can only suggest, what indeed I saw suggested some years ago, that the buzzard or the hen harrier —snatching prey from the ground or close to it as they do, rather than chasing—may cause some birds to get up in the distance, and

so lead to the notion in the sportsman's mind of an excessive fright; for the slow, heavy apparatus which I once saw in a friend's gun-room is not unlike either of these hawks. That under no possible circumstances can it look like a peregrine falcon, I am very certain.

I have not a single yard of ground of my own, nor any under my control on which I can hawk a *grouse*. I am indebted to an excellent friend of mine, who has the Buxton Moors for many a kind invitation; and to my friend Philip Brocklehurst, Esq., of Swythamley Park, for a special permission to fly my peregrines over certain limited lands here. And Mr. Brocklehurst must forgive me if I tell any of the readers of THE FIELD, who have cared to look through what at any time I may have said about *grouse*-hawking, that they owe far more to him than to myself the information which has amused them. I should not have cared to take my birds very far from home for an hour's flying, but I can get a flight at grouse in less than two hundred yards from my house; and what I have so constantly had the opportunity of doing myself, and have done, I have been able to describe to others.

Soon after I set to work in real earnest with the peregrine, I had, flying at hack with three or four more, a dark tiercel, which at first I thought little of. He seemed to me very shy, and not good-tempered. But he was given me by my kind tutor in falconry, of whom I have already spoken, who got him from Lundy Island. He reached me just as he was able to fly a little. One of the other tiercels had escaped before it knew the lure, and this is an awkward accident when the bird is too young to care for a live pigeon in a string; for, though it may be able to fly only a little, that little is as dangerous as a mile, and more provoking, if the moment you get within two or three yards of the hawk he immediately flies almost thirty. My patience, after much trial, was rather like Mr. Dickens's brandy-and-water when, on board ship, he followed his sick wife up and down the saloon with that restorative for a quarter of an hour,

as she rolled helplessly with the movement of the vessel from one end to another: there was hardly a teaspoonful left at last. The bird would not look at the lure, graced though it was with beef-steak, even at the distance of a few yards. I did, therefore, what is the only thing to do in such a case. I fastened another peregrine to the ground within easy sight of the truant, gave him a lure (fastened also), and, *close to*, pegged down some beef under a bow-net. The stray bird nodded his head, opened his wings, shut them, opened them again, and flew down to the peregrine which was eating from the lure. From that lure he was driven, as I knew he would be, by the feeding bird; he shifted easily to the meat under the net, and I had him in an instant. The peregrine which I tied down to do the dirty work of a decoy bird was the black tiercel I disliked; the black tiercel was afterwards "Black Cloud," and Black Cloud was one of the best peregrines I ever had in my life. He was killed in Somersetshire, partridge hawking, by a man who threw a stick at him, not knowing, I believe, that he was a trained bird; but I had the feeling of injustice so strong upon me at the time that I am afraid I told the keeper, should the opportunity ever present itself, to take particular pains with that man's ribs.

I remember well the first time I began to suspect that Black Cloud was a treasure. It was a windy day, and he was flying at hack with the rest; they were playing together. And a beautiful sight it is to see the hawks play. Even on the ground they are amusing, catching pieces of stick and dropping them—in short, behaving not unlike kittens. But, on the wing, they dash about, and make stoops at each other, which are most adroitly avoided. All this, of course, is Nature's teaching for something more serious presently. Black Cloud shot up the highest of all, and came down the fastest; he moved about like a swallow. I came in perfectly delighted, and said that *he* would be the bird; and so he was. His pitch was excellent, his speed wonderful; but he was then a wild bird. I only gave

him a fortnight's hack. Once taken up, he soon came to himself, and was remarkably docile. He was very good at pigeons and partridges, waiting on for any length of time, and very high. He killed one grouse—an old one—and, had I accustomed him to that flight, might have taken to grouse; but a tiercel is not often to be depended on for this quarry. I once saw him take a skylark. He had been waiting on a long time for partridges, and became tired, perhaps out of temper; a lark rose, and he had it in a moment coming down from his pitch like lightning; but I never touched the quarry, for he went quietly to a tree, and ate it there. I was flying in a country where hawking was unknown, and I shall never forget the open-mouthed stare of some passing labourers to whom, on the same day, I pointed out this hawk in the air, and asked them if they would like to see that large bird on my hand. They grinned, thinking probably that I was an amiable maniac; but when I tossed up the lure, on which he dropped at my feet, took him up, fed, and hooded him, I almost think, "after they had looked a great while," they changed their minds and suspected me of sorcery.

CHAPTER III.

STORM CLOUD—THE PRINCESS—ISLAY—NEARLY BLINDED—AN APPEAL TO THE GENEROSITY OF SPORTSMEN.

STRANGE as it may seem, the real difficulty with which the inexperienced falconer has to contend is, not the taming a hawk, but the managing the training in such a way that the bird shall fly quarry eagerly and in the most effective manner. A hawk "made" at once to the lure, from a nestling, and never shown quarry for some months, would probably never even look at a pigeon on the wing. Such a bird was once sent to me, and it flew, even when hungry, through a flock of pigeons, not taking the smallest notice of them. This was a peregrine tiercel. On the other hand, you may so fly a hawk at quarry, especially I think at game, killing day after day, and feeding the hawk up from the head and neck of the grouse or partridge—something substantial being of course added—that the dead lure will cease to have any attractions. Indeed, I confess that I have been obliged to take down some of my most successful falcons, when I did not happen to find them on the game, with a live pigeon in a string. At the same time, I have had birds—such as the Princess and Storm Cloud (not *Black* Cloud, but a falcon)—which would come to a dead lure in the middle of their best work; and yet these were brilliant birds. They curiously combined success with docility; and I remind my readers that they were brilliant, because had they not been so, their coming to the dead lure would have been nothing. Never, I would say to a young falconer, buy a hawk *only* because it comes well to the lure; see it fly quarry, and fast quarry also; but this advice I gave by implication just now,

when I mentioned the tiercel that flew through a flock of pigeons without noticing them.

Storm Cloud was shot by a ruffian, some miles from here—I confess she was in the act of carrying off one of his pigeons—on the day the Prince of Wales was married, or the day before. I traced her to a bird-stuffer, and had the hardest work to get her from him, for he had been threatened with an action at law by the shooter if he allowed anyone to take her out of the shop. I took the inspector of police with me, in order to give the thing a formidable appearance, and claimed my property, which I assured the bird-stuffer I could swear to, and which certainly had not ceased to be my property because a rascal had robbed me of its chief value—viz., the life. "He will spend 5*l.* on it," said the bird-stuffer to me, "before he will let it go. "And I will spend five-and-twenty before I lose even her skin," I replied to the bird-stuffer. It ended in my having the skin. Storm Cloud is stuffed by the famous Mr. John Hancock, the stuffer of the falcons in the Great Exhibition of 1851; and I see her now as I take my eyes for a moment off the paper on which I am writing.

She was the only excellent peregrine I ever saw come fairly to hand from a great distance, and yet she ate just as much as she liked. A brute that would look at nothing but the lure might easily be made to do so; but Storm Cloud would come out of the sky to my *hand*, not flying over and striking, but settling most gently, and this with half a crop before she came. She was a most excellent rook hawk, no discouragement, such as the quarry escaping in trees, daunting her; and she was equally good at grouse and pigeons. It is difficult for a person who is not a falconer to understand the shock which the news of such a bird's death gives one. She was only lost two days. We were on her track and close to her, and should have undoubtedly had her in a few hours, had the information that I had offered two guineas to anyone who would only *show*

her to me at liberty and uninjured reached the pigeon fancier. Time changes one's notions, and heals all manner of wounds, as I need not say; but *then* I would have gone to the stable, taken out my horse, and shot him through the head with my own hand, if by doing so I could have saved the life of Storm Cloud.

The fact of a peregrine coming to hand at all is quite exceptional. Merlins and sparrowhawks do it, and so do goshawks. The Princess, when she has been lost on a grouse, I have taken in the afternoon from a stone wall—her crop standing out like a pouter pigeon's—by simply placing my hand under her feet, perhaps with a pigeon's leg or some such trifle on it; but she never came straight to hand from the distance, only to the lure. To see this little falcon on the wing (she was small, as Storm Cloud was large) was a thing to be freshly remembered through life. From a high pitch she shot forward at the rising of a grouse, at a rate which startled those who saw it, and was even greater than Islay's; though the extraordinary *success* of the latter falcon, her almost unequalled speed, and her most adroit footing, I suppose, make her at least equal to any other hawk which I have trained. I shall speak of her presently.

I never killed a hare with the peregrine, though I have seen enough to know that it may be done with a cast of these birds. What the Princess liked best was a grouse; next to that a pigeon; at rooks she was nothing remarkable; but one day she took to flying hares in the most astounding manner. I saw her strike a hare, I think, twenty times in a succession of stoops, only stopping when the hare squatted, which she did frequently. At last she came down and grappled, and when I arrived, scarcely able to breathe with the exertion of running, hoping that for once in my life I might take a hare with a peregrine—when I was, in fact, within seven or eight yards of hawk and quarry—the hare jumped up very high, pitched off the Princess, who was trying to hold on like grim death, and disappeared down a hillside, the hawk stooping

again till they were out of sight. The fur which I pulled off the falcon's feet was all of the hare I ever really touched.

I lost the Princess only once before I lost her altogether. She had flown through two grouse seasons, and I thought she would never leave me for many hours at a time, as she never had left me. If she was out for the night, there was a pigeon in the field, to which, like other hawks I have had of late, she always came. But one day she took it into her head to disappear and stayed away exactly a fortnight. I had kept relays of pigeons out for ten days, and then I gave her up, for she was not in the neighbourhood. At last there was a cry of a falcon over the house; I went out with a pigeon, and she came (fat as ever though she was) in an instant to my feet. I fancy a snow-storm had sent her home.

When at length I really lost her, I have no doubt she was shot. An excellent and noble friend of mine saw her last flight, and sent me two peregrines from Scotland as soon afterwards as he could. I have her photograph—a very good one; but that is all left me now of the Princess—except, indeed, the memory of those bright days we have spent together on the hills, and the great wish that I could see her once more, even if it were only as she dashed across this valley, with a thing like a dark ball twenty yards before her, making my heart leap as she went.

I pause for a moment in this little history, to say how thoroughly the being wedded to one special sport takes away the enthusiasm for others. For myself, I am not now quite in that predicament, for I have cooled down a good deal of late, and I think I am almost fonder of the memory of my birds than I am of the sport of falconry itself. I like a day's pheasant shooting very much indeed: with all my honest regret that sport has lately taken a phase of which I disapprove, I like a gun and a covert full of pheasants. Who does not?

I make a point of mentioning this sort of feeling, because I, who

ask so much sympathy for my own notions, should be inconsistent if I ignored it. To me *the* great charm of sport rests in anticipation, in uncertainty, in some labour, in the necessity of expedients, in the employment of animals trained to the chase; and I protest against the loading and firing as fast as you can taking a *high* place in sport; but I won't deny that I like the opportunity of doing so once or twice in the year. While hawking was with me a positive passion, I should not have admitted this: indeed, I did not feel it. But, strong as my opinions remain as to what ought to be, I am occasionally dazzled with what is.

I rather wanted an opportunity of being understood in this matter, for I should shrink from being set down as a coxcomb who thinks that all the world is wrong, and that he and his few friends are alone right. I shall go on with my subject much more agreeably to myself, now that I can seem to offer my experience of a sport which is certainly not at all remunerative as far as the bag is concerned, simply for what that sport is worth.

If a concentrated excitement is one of the elements of sport, a flight after important quarry has one of those elements in perfection. And there is an old stager now sitting under the shed not far from the room in which I am writing, who has given me and others excitement enough in all conscience.* This is Islay, a three-year-old falcon, and therefore waiting for her fourth grouse season: her fourth, that is, in point of time: in point of flying she has only passed through two—last year having been what all know it was. Not a gun was fired nor a hawk flown on these moors. †

In the year 1865, I rather thought matters were coming to an end with me; I had an attack of pleurisy, or some pleuritic affection, in the summer. One hawk, and one only, a falcon, was flying at hack;

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* This hawk is lost. † The year of the grouse-disease, 1867.

I had not left my room, and scarcely my bed, when she had been out nearly six weeks; and this is a long time, especially with a hawk lightly belled as she was. Her entire absence for two days was reported, and I was determined she should be taken on the first opportunity. At four o'clock one morning, in most beautiful weather, I looked out of the window, and saw this falcon quietly feeding in the bow-net which had been set on the lawn. I put on some things, went down, and caught her at once, and I am very glad I did, for I took no harm by the imprudence, and the hawk was Islay.

Many hawks, which turn out well in the end, fly low for the first few weeks. The Princess rose at once, as did many other hawks of mine; but, if I remember rightly, Islay did not get to her pitch just at first. She is a full-sized bird, and little hawks, as a rule, get up high to begin with. I soon saw, however, what she was made of. A windy day, when the wind is soft and warm, generally brings out a peregrine intended for game; if she don't go up then, one begins to fear. Islay is a bird whose heart is set on grouse; she throws away no chance, and strains every nerve when the time comes. Her ordinary pitch is only about eighty yards, though she will occasionally rise a quarter of a mile; but she keeps well over the heads of the beaters, and is ready, with two or three rapid strokes, to put herself into full swing the moment a feather of the right sort leaves the ground. Grouse need fly fast to escape such a hawk as this; that they do fly very fast I need not tell many of my readers; but when they get away from such birds as Islay or the Princess, they do not save their lives by speed. They get away very often, but they do so by dashing into cover; there, in a hilly country, they are often safe, as it is a difficult thing to mark the exact spot of their concealment.

Islay has her faults; the other hawks which I have mentioned had positively none. She is the only bird ever in my possession,

that attempted to injure me. It was done grouse-hawking. I had just lifted her on the quarry, and was turning the grouse so that the hawk might not eat the breast, but confine herself to the head and neck, when unfortunately it slipped out of my hand. Immediately she flew at my face, and there clung like a little fiend with both feet, giving me both torture and fright. Fright, because I was afraid lest she should change her hold, providentially not in either of my eyes as yet, and so blind me for life. She drew blood with all her claws, and made the places swell. I caught hold of her legs, one with each hand, but she would not loose. One of my boys, however was near, and he put the grouse close to her, to which she moved from my face. I ought to have seized her by the neck at once; she would then have changed her hold to my hand, in order to save herself from strangulation. I think it very unlikely that she will attempt anything of this kind again, and of course I am careful that she has no provocation. The best way with her is not to lift the grouse at all, but to take her off it on a pigeon's wing, or something of that kind, secure, a jesse, and then you are safe. She has also the bad fault of occasionally stepping back off her game as you approach her with your hand, though this is only the case when she is careless from not being sufficiently sharp-set. As a hawk to *kill grouse with*, however—and I suppose *that* is the point—I will back her against any trained bird in the world. She has also a wonderful knowledge of localities, and is *never* lost.

I have now picked out of hawks, spread over the space of some years, two or three which seemed to me specially good and remarkable; and, though no doubt I could fill pages with the histories of my other peregrines, I forbear—believing that the reader has had quite sufficient already.

In another chapter I hope to give a few anecdotes, and, in a fifth, and last, to say something about my doings with the goshawks. I will not, however, lay down any particular rule for the order in

which I may write my experiences. These are professedly desultory chapters, and one had better perhaps wait for the convenience of the moment. Things strike one by the way.

The time is drawing near* when young birds will be flying at hack, and falconers are already making sure of materials to work upon in the shape of nestling peregrines. Let me advise beginners—and it is for such chiefly that I write—to take every pains that the young birds are well and regularly fed from the time they are taken from the eyrie till the moment they are placed in the hamper and entrusted to the railway. This can, of course, only be done by writing to the keepers, or the dealers, into whose hands they at first fall; when they reach the falconer he will know what to do with them. Also, I would not have them taken too soon; when this is done they are subject to cramp, and, if they escape it, they are generally screamers. For my own part, I can't endure a screamer, the jar on one's nerves is too much for me; besides, screaming birds, though always courageous, are seldom very high flyers.

Let me also, in this place, ask any gentleman who owns the land on which peregrines breed, or who has control there, to spare the old birds. I know I am open to the retort, that the request is almost an impertinent one, for that I am asking a man to make what he will consider sacrifices in a cause with which he has no concern. If that is said, I am silent because I think myself that every man is concerned in affairs of humanity and generosity; but if it is answered that, in consideration of a time-honoured sport, for the sake of those glorious birds themselves, or that nature may rule by her own laws, for a time, the peregrines shall be spared this year at least, then I think that a noble thing has been said, and one which will never bring regret with it to the heart of a British sportsman.

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* This was written early in the summer of 1868.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME TRIFLING ANECDOTES.

It is sometimes difficult when one has made a promise to fulfil it, and I confess that, having just turned over in my mind the hawking anecdotes which I intended to offer my readers, I am disappointed at finding them so trivial, and so few and far between. A circumstance may strike one as singular and worth relating at the time of its occurrence, which, when looked back upon, may appear bald and ordinary enough. In fact, I must not confine myself in this chapter to strict anecdote, or I shall make only a few paragraphs of it.

I once lost a merlin for three months, and at the end of that time it was brought to me in a basket, alive and well, having been captured, only a couple of miles or so from the house, in a rather singular manner. I have mentioned the incident before, but so long ago that perhaps it will bear repetition. Some of the farmer lads about here set snares for fieldfares in the winter, after the following manner; and in describing it I make no hesitation in quoting a few lines of what I wrote in 1859: "The snare is made thus: A straight round piece of a branch is cut, from any tree of tough wood, about two or three feet in length, and three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Every twig is carefully taken off, and the marks of the knife obliterated. At intervals of about an inch and a quarter small holes are bored with a nail-passer, into which are inserted the knots of black horse-hair nooses, each made of a length of three hairs, doubled and twisted, so that the noose is of six hairs' strength, except at the loop. The opened noose is perhaps three inches in diameter. Little pegs driven into the holes, over the knots, make matters secure. One end of the stick is forked, the

other notched. Two small bunches of mountain-ash berries are fastened to the stick, some little distance apart, and so as to hang under the nooses. A rather naked tree is now selected in a spot frequented by the birds: a forked branch of the tree is found, cleared of twigs, and forced to bend apart a little, in order that it may receive, when released, the inserted snare with a tight embrace. On one of these snares my merlin was caught: nothing could have been a purer accident. There was no bait which could attract him, unless he mistook the berries for raw meat, which is very unlikely. Of course, I expected to hear that some small bird was hanging in one of the nooses, and that the hawk came to him; but no such thing,"—and so on. The fact is, the hawk happened to settle in the tree, and chose what he thought was a horizontal, and therefore a comfortable, bough: that bough was the snare, and the capture was certainly curious, as the chances against such a thing occurring must have been very considerable indeed. Of course he was caught by the legs. This bird was on the wing again, and flying larks for me, only a fortnight after he was taken.

It is well known how birds pursued by a hawk will dash into a room through an open window, or even through the glass. I have had one or two windows broken by pigeons in making their escape, and a ring-ouzel was once taken by a merlin of mine as it flew against the pane without breaking it. That merlin was at liberty about the house for weeks together, and would come to hand whenever I opened the window and called her with some food. I used to take her into the room, feed her, and then let her go again.

Two rather singular terminations of a flight occurred to me in pigeon-flying, and one with grouse. I had flown the Princess at a pigeon—out of the game season—and felt sure that she had killed it somewhere near the house. The flight was only about half a mile. I looked in vain for some time till the bell guided me to the hawk shed, under which the pigeon had dashed for safety, and there was

the falcon eating it close to her own block, so that anyone passing would have thought she was fastened by her leash in the ordinary way. The end of another flight with another hawk, was, I knew, somewhere near a farmhouse; and, after some search, an old man came out to say that the falcon was eating a pigeon on the table in the "parlour." And so she was. The two birds must have flown close together up the narrow entrance-passage, turned through an open door to the left, and got into this unused room. And unused many of these "parlours" are, except on very grand occasions. Some of us remember Albert Smith's description of the same sort of rooms in Broek, into which the mistress of the house went every Saturday, when she rubbed, polished, dusted, washed, and cleaned in every possible way, then put the key into her pocket, and never opened the door till that day week.

The grouse I spoke of simply dashed into a room of this house, through an open window, and was taken. I saw the flight, and was afraid the falcon would strike the house in her rapid progress; both birds were making for the middle of it, and the hawk escaped injury by adroitly shooting up the side when she was within a few yards of the stones.

I once took up a falcon which I found, at the end of a flight, with a pigeon in *each* foot. This, like many other things, would be wonderful indeed without the explanation, and, like them, very simple when it is given. The flight ended in my coach house, into which the dovecote pigeons, seeing the hawk coming, had dashed together with the proper quarry; all, therefore, were no doubt huddled together in a corner, and the hawk's second foot was hardly intended to grasp the second pigeon.

It is not uncommon with some few falcons to knock your hat off, or to strike the dog, if game is not found soon enough; and I once had my wideawake carried from my head by a female sparrowhawk, who began to dig her claws into it when she got it on the ground.

To show what *wind* a hawk may be got into by constant flying, I may mention that I saw a falcon of mine, after flying some kestrels eagerly for several minutes, after leaving them for a grouse, which she lost in a wood, after flying a rook over a long space of open ground and losing it in cover, came back, and from a pitch over my head, fly and kill a grouse which I sprung from under my feet. This was Maid o' the Mist. And Islay once killed an old cock grouse after a two-mile flight. In this latter instance, however, my only wonder is, that anything could possibly live before Islay for that space: and I can only explain the fact by supposing that the old grouse fell under her foot without a blow (not an uncommon thing with experienced grouse) once or twice in the flight, and so put the hawk out; getting up again with his quick little wings when she was quite low, he would dash off at full speed, leaving her to get into her swing again, and too near the ground to do so easily. It took us an hour and a half, I think, to find the hawk on this occasion, and she was even then on what was left of the grouse, with a very full crop indeed.

I have twice had peregrines sent home in a basket by well-meaning people who managed to catch them on their quarry, and, imagining that the hawks were lost, though they were doing me a service. After a time, however, the neighbourhood understands one's ways—indeed, some of the people become respectable falconers; and then these little accidents don't happen. It is, I need hardly say, a difficult thing to look pleasant when one sees the bent feathers of the wing and tail. Still, if no feather is really broken, "a little (hot) water clears us of this deed."

One morning, looking out of my bedroom window to find my five merlins, which were at hack, I counted, to my surprise, six on the garden wall. The stranger was a nestling bred on some of the moors near, I suppose, though I can never hear of a nest; and, I am ashamed to say, we so bungled matters that we did not catch her. I put out a merlin on a *block* in the field, and thus frightened her,

though merlins are easy birds to catch. A peg buried among the grass, a round stone for a seat for the decoy hawk, a bow-net well covered with a little grass, and the feathers of a thrush, or some such bird; a small bird, alive, if possible, under the net; perhaps the snare mentioned above, cleverly set—these things would have given an account of the stray hawk, most likely. The difficulties would have been to have kept the hack merlins away from the net, and to have got a live bird in time. However, a dead one would most likely have answered, and the only chance of preventing the hack merlins from being troublesome would have been to gorge them from the lures as much as possible.

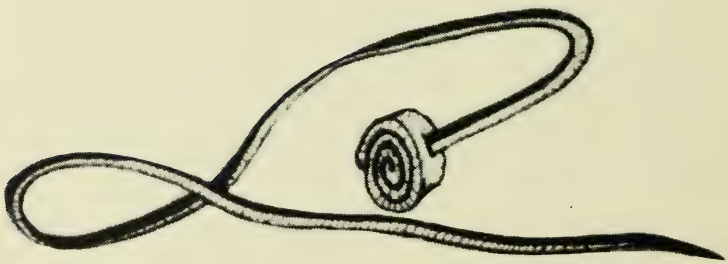
Hawk catching, I should think, must be exciting and amusing work when you don't sit all day in a mud hut waiting for the appearance of a bird. I have to go through it every year in a very mild form—I speak of taking young peregrines up from their hack. Some are taken most easily, even without a net, but others require a long string and considerable care. I only once had an accident, and then a falcon lost one of her claws, but she did not make a bird of any consequence.

I am not sure whether it is generally known that merlins will take mice and cockchafers. I have seen them catch both; the latter are fairly hawked, and I think I have seen the hawk put down his beak to his foot to kill or eat while he was upon the wing. Hobbies, we all know, are great insect catchers.

Hawks at hack, especially merlins, are very easily killed when bathing. At such a time they take little notice of a stranger, and he may come, if he is so disposed, within a few yards of a bathing bird, and kill it with a stone. I remember looking out of my window early in the morning some years ago, and enjoying the sight of two hack merlins at their ablutions in the brook. Presently a person with very scanty clothing and no shoes, a regular tramp, came lounging along. Suddenly he stopped, and made a dead point for

an instant; then he carefully lowered his whole person, and picked up a stone. In another instant his arm would have been lifted, but I made so unearthly a shout from the window that he dropped the stone, and walked forward with a briskness utterly foreign to his nature, never turning his head for a moment. As a rule, people are very good to hawks at hack; they like to see them play, and they take an interest in the thing.

As I feared, at the opening of this chapter, would be the case, I have had nothing startling, and I fear little interesting, to relate in the way of incident and anecdote; and I am glad to finish it. Besides, a thunder-storm is coming this way. It distracts one terribly. Let me go out on the lawn and smoke; I shall be all right when the first great drops come, and lie as large as florins on the flags.



CHAPTER V.

IS CHIEFLY ON THE GOSHAWK.

THE thunder-storm passed over my neighbourhood on Tuesday, the 19th of May, but it did not come well down. The first lightnings which I saw dimly in Derbyshire and Staffordshire scarcely fulfilled their promise; and when the rain reached here, though it was welcomed with thankfulness and blessings, we were disappointed that it did not pour more thoroughly. It was indeed delightful while it lasted; it was like those sermons, so curiously rare, which, occupying a full half-hour in their delivery, leave one sorrowing that they are so short. It was unlike them only in a third particular; for to me the charm of a storm begins with its anticipation, is continued while it lasts, and is consummated in the relief that it is over. It is awful, but it is most glorious, to be "dazzled by the livid-flickering fork, and deafened with the stammering cracks and claps:"

> Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,
> Moaning and calling out of other lands,
> Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more
> To peace.

I think to sit out of doors, and to listen to that "moaning and calling out of other lands," when all is over, when the earth smells fresh from the rain, and all the sweetbriars and gillyflowers are alive with fragrance, is to pick out of existence, for our great enjoyment, some of its most golden hours.

I wrote no more that evening, poor as the storm was. Let us look for a tempest some day, to be more idle in still! But I thought that I had not done much to amuse, in the last of these chapters, those

people who look at them; and that I should be only wise were I to consider how I might finish the subject with something better worth reading.

This, I think, is the last article of anything like a series which I shall write on falconry. I am painfully conscious that I have worn the subject threadbare, and whether it be so or not, I write under an oppression in the conviction. Besides, I am beginning to tire of the place in which I have learned the greater part of my lesson—certainly all the grouse-hawking part. The incumbent of a wretchedly poor living, who has been shut out of the world for twelve years, who has lived all that time in what are called "the wilds of Cheshire," may well find an excuse for saying that he is not altogether satisfied with his lot. I remember how I revelled in the wildness of this place when I first came to it—how I thought that I could never tire of the hills and heather; but the time has come when the wilderness begins to seem too wild, and when the isolation becomes painful. I should like to get back again to the midland or southern counties; I should like to come a little nearer civilisation. Not but that I should leave with regret several friends here; friends who, living some miles from this place, have yet taken pains to give me many glimpses of society—have done more than that—have been most hearty, hospitable, and genial. My horse brings me to their houses, but not without a struggle; for these are not roads to trifle with, and a beast must be sure-footed indeed who passes them without tripping. However, let me be thankful that I am not in a town. Matters might be worse; and one can't help having some hope or dream, not very definite, but never quite absent, which pictures some good straggling house near a small village, where it is possible to have a little commerce with the civilised world. I wish some good Christian would offer me such a living. But can I, more than Sisyphus, place the stone on the top of the mountain? It is the old tale—*vetant leges Jovis.*

I ought to apologise if in giving my history as a falconer I have become too biographical, and made it, in the last paragraph, too generally personal. Let me, however, avoid such an error in future by going at once into the subject which is to occupy the greater part of this chapter—viz., that of the goshawks.

My first feeling about hawking was, I well remember, that I should like to carry a bird on my hand which would dash off it on occasion, much after the manner of greyhounds from the slips; and when I was told that the chief excellence of a peregrine consisted in the height of its pitch, and that the glorious thing was to see it start out of the sky after its quarry, I was very much disappointed. I thought I should never care for a system of flying which placed the trained bird at such a distance from its master. The flying from a pitch seemed to me, when considered as a part of *sport*—which is to an extent artificial—too like nature, and too little like art; while flying from the fist, or "at the bolt" as it is called, had the charm which I seemed to have sought in falconry, for there was the disciplined animal positively leaving the touch of your glove to pursue the flying quarry.

Perhaps I have not entirely overcome that feeling now, though I am a thorough game hawker, and consider a stoop from a great height not only one of the finest and most invigorating sights in the world, but as the result of our art at its very highest. Yet we must not forget, in all our worship of the peregrine after *game*, that in heron-hawking the falcon starts from the fist. Of course, in that great sport there are numberless stoops—more, probably, than in any other, except lark-hawking—but the first flight is not from above. I am sorry that I know nothing practically of heron-hawking; still I can realise it all from beginning to end.

However, my first love, and that perhaps of others in their early days of falconry, finds its home in the goshawk; for this bird, like the sparrowhawk and merlin, starts from your hand,

or at any rate from some tree near you, at once after the quarry.

The first goshawk I had here was not mine; it was most kindly lent me for a good many months—indeed I think for more than a year—by a gentleman who lives near Ware. This was a fine female bird, injured in her plumage, and with a little blot in the yellow of one of her eyes, which, however, did not in the least touch the sight, nor do I think it reached the pupil at all. I killed many rabbits with her, both wild and bagged, and one hare about three-fourths grown. The account of that flight I gave fully in "Falconry: its Claims, History, and Practice," and will not repeat it.

My goshawks, though of course showing sometimes the natural sulkiness of disposition almost peculiar to the species, or shared with it by the sparrowhawk, were uncommonly tame and amiable birds when in a good humour. The one of which I speak used to play with my watch chain, tossing the seal from her with her beak, and catching it, taking me by the button in a very familiar manner. Another bird, a female, would come to hand eagerly from a tree or wall, fifty yards off, when in real flying order; and once, on a cold frosty night, tucked her head under my beard as I was carrying her home from a distance.

But notwithstanding that goshawks properly trained will come to hand, I like to accustom them to fly on occasion to the lure, and for this reason; the best bird amongst them may (good judge as you may be of her present humour) sometimes a little deceive you, and not be quite in the flying order you expected when you took her from the perch. In this condition she may possibly, in the neighbourhood of trees, plague you a good deal about coming directly to hand; and it is then, having no rabbit or pigeon with you perhaps that you will find the ordinary falcon's lure very useful. Still, you can almost always tell when a goshawk is in what they call "yarak," *i.e.*, simply in a good temper, decidedly hungry, and eager for

quarry. She gives two or three screams at your approach; sets out her feathers, making herself look large; has a most peculiar look in her yellow eyes—a sort of mixture of earnestness and amiability; and perhaps rouses herself and begins to pick her plumage—"prunes" herself as they call it—when on your glove. Beware of the opposite symptoms. It is of no use taking her from her perch if she gives a chirping sound, very different from the scream; if she has a wild eye with contracted pupil; if she makes herself look small, by closing all her feathers tightly round her.

To get a goshawk into "yarak" requires very considerable judgment and experience. She must not be under-fed, or she will not have her full power; nor over-fed, or perhaps she won't look at the quarry; and she wants society as much nearly as the sparrowhawk does—that bird so curiously, except in its length of leg, herself in miniature.

I never hooded these birds; but I think it would be found useful to make them endure the hood moderately well. However, except in travelling, or when very hungry, they are much better without it. Indeed, nothing whatever could be done with a goshawk which was kept hooded many hours in the day. This bird, I repeat, wants society to keep it in anything like order—I mean the presence of people, dogs, and so on. The noise of sharpening a scythe, or of carriage or cart wheels, too, drives it wild till it learns by habit not to dread them. But it should be accustomed to all manner of sights; and I really don't know whether the neighbourhood of a croquet-lawn would not be a good place for the bow-perch, though certainly not till the hawk had been carried on the fist close to the players for some days, else it would bate too violently.

But once in "yarak," no devices need be resorted to; simple *work* will do everything. Alternate beef-steak and rabbit with the fur on is the best food. One-third or more of a crop of one of these daily—more rabbit perhaps than beef—with a gorge every fifth day

or (with many birds) every fourth, is about what ought to be done to get a goshawk into "yarak," as far as the mere feeding goes. And my own experience is that they, and *all* hawks, fly best on the day after they have had a *moderate* feed of fresh beefsteak. The carrying which was required to get the bird in order, and was then perhaps somewhat irksome, is, of course, a necessary part of the sport when she is in flying condition, and, together with the whole affair, *keeps* her in "yarak."

I never had any experience with the jerfalcons; and, next to the peregrine, I like the goshawk. She is a most companionable bird, and can be flown in the most inclosed country, and where a peregrine would be of but little service. I have taken rabbits with these birds in the open fields, in woods, and amongst rocks, with and without ferrets, and I confess to a great liking for the sport. If I lived in an inclosed and wooded country, I should think one of these hawks almost a necessary of life.

They are soon broken to the ferret, especially if a white one is used, and will wait with a curious patience till the rabbit bolts; then they leave the hand in an instant, and some little care is necessary to ensure your not holding the jesses even one thought too long. In a wood, if the first rabbit is missed, you will probably have the next flight from a tree in which the hawk has settled, and you will generally find *that* one a kill. I think, however, I like the open the best, where the rabbits are kicked out of rushes or tufts of grass; and, as I intimated in the first chapter, your hawk will look most anxiously for the result of each kick.

The best hold to get of the rabbit is one foot on the head, the other *well* behind the shoulder, on the loins if possible; the worst on the rump. Most goshawks fly at the head, but I have known the antipodes made for time after time; and this is most provoking, as the quarry is almost sure to escape. An old buck rabbit is no joke even in the feet of a female goshawk, and must be held in the best

way. The male bird is too small for full-grown rabbits, and should be kept entirely for pheasants, landrails, water-hens, and perhaps young partridges. The goshawk is a very slow bird, and a pheasant once thoroughly in the swing of its flight will often beat it hollow. The best chance is at the rise, and if the hawk is in a tree that chance is very considerable. Undoubtedly too you may kill a passing pheasant, especially if you are above it.

I never threw the hinder parts of a rabbit to a goshawk on its perch—only the head and shoulders. On the fist, she may be fed with the hind legs, because there is nothing very distinctive about them when in your hand.

I have spoken of flying from trees, and certainly the position attained on a bough is better than that on the falconer's hand; but a young bird should be flown in the open. The fist is quite a good enough position to kill from, and if a bird gets into the habit of taking to trees, she may tease your life out by stopping there an hour at a time, utterly regardless of all your allurements. A live rabbit, however, or a live pigeon in a string, if she has killed a few such pigeons, will bring her down, she being really hungry; and, unless she *is* hungry, as I said before, she has no business in the field at all.

No goshawk ever attempted to injure me, except by flying at my legs when she was on food at the bow-perch; a real squeeze from such terrible feet would be serious; but I have never suffered any inconvenience from them. Still, after the accident with Islay, I feel the necessity of being careful with some of the larger hawks; and I had very much rather that a piece of food did not slip out of my hand when a hungry goshawk was feeding upon it before I had secured the jesses. I once thought of trying the male golden eagle with hares and rabbits, but I don't care to run any risk; neither, I think, would such a bird be safe with children. Let me also say that very little children should not be allowed to go

near a goshawk's bow-perch, especially if the bird is feeding; for what would reach a man's leg might reach a child's face.

Perhaps I ought to say that, in all probability, the first goshawk which a man has will disappoint him. Though very nice birds when well trained and in "yarak," they are most sulky and temper-trying at other times. But carriage on the fist, low feeding except on gorge days (which must *certainly* not be passed over), a public position for the bow-perch, and then plenty of work, make them all right; and when a man can kill with one bird three or four rabbits, or even on occasion double that number, in a morning's walk, he will think the result worth all the initiatory trouble.

Goshawks will stand a good deal of exposure to cold, but not too much. I once had one dreadfully cramped in the winter—she was an old bird, too; but the winter was very severe. Both her feet were "doubled up," so to speak, and remained in that state till we tried goose grease. And a most wonderful remedy it was; it suddenly made her as nearly well as might be.

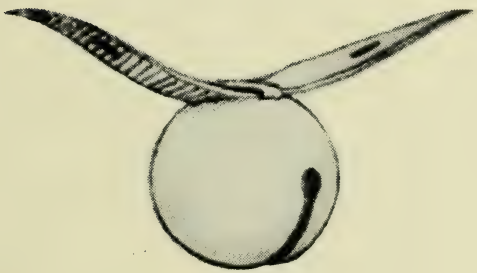
These birds may be kept without much expense, especially where rabbits are to be got for nothing. I most earnestly, however, advise some beef of the best kind. Rats, if fairly caught—*i.e.*, free from all suspicion of having been poisoned—are very well occasionally; and the leg of an old hen is a nice change. The heads and necks of fowls which are used in the house should be reserved, unplucked, by all falconers, as they cost nothing, and are very respectable food.

In no systematic way, subject to no particular dates, bit by bit, I have now told my friends "how I became a falconer." They have seen me with hawks of different kinds, bungling and disappointed at the beginning, but quite as successful as I ever hoped to be, towards the middle and at the end. If any stranger to the sport should read these chapters, and choose to make an attempt at falconry, he will have no reason to be discouraged, for I have told

him the truth most strictly—I have not smoothed one difficulty in the relating it. I have only warned him against mistakes into which I fell, and which he may avoid.

And in saying "Good bye," I can only add that I shall always be glad to help others, as I was helped years ago, by the friend to whom I referred in the first chapter of this series.

To that friend I dedicate, now that I am saying farewell to falconry on paper, these five chapters especially—because they, in some measure, record the result of his instructions; and, indeed, without his disinterested kindness at the beginning, which led to our close friendship towards the end, I should not have been able to write anything at all.



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